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# STRAY SKETCHES IN CHAKMAKPORE,

FROM

THE NOTE-BOOK OF AN IDLE CITIZEN,

BY

NAGESH WISHWANATH PAI, B.A., LL.B.,

*Pleader, High Court.*

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# To the Memory of

THE LATE

DR. ANANTA CHANDROBA, G. G. M. C., J. P.,

*Hon. Asst. Surgeon to H. E. The Viceroy,*

*Superintendent of Vaccination, P. C., Fellow of the*

*Bombay University, &c.*

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

HIS GRATEFUL FRIEND AND HUMBLE ADMIRER,

THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE.

THESE sketches are chiefly intended to amuse, but the writer is not without hopes that the Western reader will find in them sufficient novelty to excite his curiosity and interest. The main idea has been to give pictures of Indian life, pure and simple. Many curious and out-of-the-way characters will be found delineated in these pages, and if the reader is led to observe and study them for himself in their "native haunts" the book shall not have been written in vain.

BOMBAY,

*June*, 1894.



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# STRAY SKETCHES IN CHAKMAKPORE.



## I.

### THE CAT.

As a friend and companion of man the cat is a fraud. So long as she gets of the best, and plenty of it, Puss moves about the house with a pleased mew. If you stroke her hair gently the right way, she expresses her satisfaction with a complacent purr. But she is not to be trusted. She has no conscience worth speaking of. She is ever on the prowl for forbidden dainties, which she can appropriate silently and unobserved. The life of your pet canary will not be worth a moment's purchase if Puss can get it in a convenient corner for a little confidential chat. Poor Polly, unless she keeps a bright look-out, and remains well out of reach, runs the risk of coming to a sudden and violent end. Pity is a weakness with which the cat is not hampered. Gratitude with her, as with many of her betters, is only "a lively sense of favors to come." If the supply of good things fails, Pussy shifts her quarters to the next convenient camping ground.

The usefulness of the cat, in keeping down the prolific and destructive members of the genus *Mus*, is open to serious question. If she is sleek and strong,

and not disinclined for a little active work, she can carry on for a time a pretty successful war against "rats and mice and such small deer." But she soon tires of the game, and prefers a quiet dinner at her master's expense to the troubles of the chase. Moreover, the truculent fiends, rejoicing in the graceful appellation of Bandicoot, are quite beyond her strength. All this is of course even taking Pussy at her best, but she is not always inclined to be good. When hungry, she is quite as likely to fancy a bowl of milk or any other delicacy, as her legitimate prey. The temptation of having a little feast on the sly, without unnecessary labour, is too great to be resisted, and from a useful ally Pussy is at times converted into a secret and treacherous foe.

In the pursuit of her felonious object, the cat is likely to cause more damage and annoyance than the loss of a few edibles now and then. It is, of course, bad enough to have one's property appropriated without permission. But when the wretched creature indulges her wicked fancy for the milk carefully preserved for poor baby, leaving that unphilosophic infant to bewail, in loud and unparliamentary howls, the loss of his usual nourishment, to the annihilation of sleep and the general loss of temper, you are apt to feel aggrieved, and to nurse a secret desire for dire vengeance against the four-footed thief.

It is scarcely less provoking to be startled out of your sweet slumbers by a deafening crash, which, after raising all sorts of vague and terrible apprehensions, leaves behind the settled and painful conviction, that cook's well-meant efforts have proved unavailing, and

that the wholesale destruction of crockery has been superadded to the burglarious misappropriation of some costly dainty.

As a playmate for the children the temper of the cat is extremely uncertain. So long as the little things are ready to share their sweets with her, Pussy is grateful enough, and may condescend to a game of romps. But it would never do to depend too much upon her good behaviour, for she is easily offended. An unintentional push, or even a careless movement suffices to provoke her, and Pussy swears, and the sudden use of her paw produces long red marks of a painful character on the poor victim's delicate skin. The ill-used child wonders, in the midst of its sobs, whether the creature keeps a supply of pins in her soft paws.

In her domestic relations Pussy is decidedly unfortunate. Evidently she and her brute of a partner do not get on comfortably together. But instead of contenting herself with the legitimate remedy of a delicate curtain-lecture, or if that fail, agreeing to a judicial separation on the ground of incompatibility of temperament, she prefers to take the whole world into her confidence (a confidence which is not always sufficiently appreciated). She proclaims her wrongs from the house-tops in a shrill piercing voice, and indulges in the unlady-like liberty of using a good deal of strong language. Her rough lord is nettled, and answers with sullen and deep growls, warning her not to try his patience too far. The irate Puss fairly loses her temper, and proceeds to discuss the matter tooth and nail.

Whilst this pleasant family quarrel is going on, the suffering inhabitants of the whole neighbourhood are driven to the last verge of despair, and try to relieve their feelings by throwing anything that comes handy at the noisy disputants. A well-directed stone, or the accidental loss of equilibrium, precipitating both combatants from the roof, causes a temporary cessation of hostilities, and the happy pair depart hastily in different directions, and peace once more reigns in the neighbourhood.

Such is Pussy all the world over, but in India she enjoys a few special privileges. This is, of course, with the indulgent Hindoo, for with the others *Felis Domestica* is scarcely much of a favourite. The dog is an unclean animal. His touch carries pollution in a mild sort of way. Under ordinary circumstances he may be handled with impunity. But whilst a high-caste Hindoo is taking his dinner, if a dog touches him, it becomes a somewhat annoying affair. The meal is polluted, and has become useless to the poor hungry but over-scrupulous soul. It must either be thrown away, or given to some starved wretch, who cares a fico for the *Shasters*. Meanwhile the poor Hindoo has to go through the ceremony of thorough ablution before he can sit down to a fresh meal. With matters standing thus, it is a decided comfort that the undesirable quadruped can be kept away easily. It would, on the other hand, be almost impossible to take similar precautions against the intrusion of the ubiquitous cat. So the far-seeing *Shasters* are more indulgent to her. They do not quite go the length of canonising her, but they quite absolve her from even the suspicion of uncleanness.

Convenience must be the *ratio decidendi*, or else why prefer the cat to the dog?

Taken on her own merits, the cat is scarcely desirable as a neighbour, and the individual of average temper would perhaps sooner or later declare a war of extermination against her. So the merciful *Shasters* have made it a high crime and misdemeanour to take her life. Killing a poor dog is not exactly a meritorious thing, but the guilt thereof may be easily absolved. But nothing short of a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Benares can atone for the destruction of a cat of malice prepense, or even by pure misadventure.

But with all these safeguards Pussy has not always a good time of it. She is prolific, and insists on bringing into an already over-crowded world creatures for whom there is neither use nor room. She is well aware that her little brood is by no means welcome, and guards the poor helpless offspring with all the jealous affection of a mother. She tries to keep their whereabouts a profound secret, and on the slightest suspicion of their being discovered takes them away to other and safer quarters. But by-and-by the unfortunate creatures begin to get hungry, and insist on keeping up a noisy and somewhat unmusical concert with all the power of their baby-lungs. This naturally leads to their being regarded in the light of nuisances, and efforts are thenceforth made to get rid of them. The kind heart of a Hindoo naturally recoils from the idea of putting a sudden and violent end to their existence. Two alternatives remain: to take an early opportunity to pack the whole four-footed family to the Pinjrapole, or to eject them into the streets to

shift for themselves. If the latter alternative is adopted, the poor starving creatures go mewing and whining about the streets for days, until some kind soul takes them in his hospitable home, or they lay them down to die, to be removed to the dust-bin, and thence to the distant flats with the least possible ceremony. Such is life in this best of worlds, and such the merciful ways of an inscrutable Providence.

## II.

THE PANCHÁXARI (*Hindoo Spirit Medium*).

INDIA is a great place for spirits and ghosts, and the whole of that interesting family who move on planes other than the ordinary physical one. To this latter we poor mortals are condemned, for a time at least, unless we happen to be on terms of more or less familiarity with the Mahatmas. The gifted exponent of esoteric Buddhism did, indeed, reveal to an admiring, if somewhat sceptical, world, the wealth of occult knowledge, which lay wrapped up in the impenetrable veil of Oriental mysticism. But long before the pioneers of Theosophy set foot on Indian soil, the spirits were there, moving silently and unobserved from place to place, and revealing themselves occasionally by unmistakable manifestations.

Now there are spirits and spirits. There are the evil ones, who bear eternal malice to the human race, and are ever on the watch for an opportunity to do them harm in one way or another. On the other hand, you have the good spirits, who are more friendly to man and ready on occasions to relieve the faithful from persecution. Of course there is usually some slight understanding beforehand that the kindly influence is not to be exerted without a trifling honorarium, and due satisfaction in this respect is enforced, under diverse pains and penalties. But we, who live in this



huxtering world, with "nothing for nothing, and precious little for sixpence" as our motto, can surely take no exception to little arrangements of that kind. After the preliminaries are duly settled, the battle begins between the powers of good and evil. Often the malicious spirit is routed, and the poor victim breathes freely once more, and feels thankful for his deliverance. At times the oppressor proves too strong, and then the unlucky wretch goes the weary round of pilgrimages to distant shrines until he is either rescued from his pitiable condition, or falls a victim to the morbid influences at work within him.

But good spirits, however kindly disposed, must have a medium through which they can make their influence felt. There must be some one who can open negotiations with them, some one who can act as their accredited agent, who is authorised to entertain applications from sufferers all and sundry, and who can settle the little question of an honorarium between the benignant spirit and his devotees. This useful office is filled by the *Panchàxari*. He is the great spirit-medium of the East. To him people go in hundreds for relief. At his usual seances crowds of the faithful come to ask various favors from his master. Besides these public performances, he is, of course, open to private engagements of a confidential nature at the residences of select and wealthy clients.

Considering his varied occult powers, and especially the wonderful influence he possesses over the world of spirits, the man is modest, at least as far as his outward appearance is concerned. He dons the every-day costume of the East. There is very little to distinguish

him from a clod-hopping labourer or an itinerant tradesman in a small way of business. But we must not always judge by appearances, for the truly great are ever apt to disguise themselves in order to escape idle or impertinent curiosity. As far as the good things of this world are concerned, he is not overburdened with them, for, in this sinful age of *Kali*, the believers are few, and not over-disposed to part with their spare cash. The hateful *Bilatee* learning is sapping all too rapidly the foundations of faith, and people are grown sceptical, and are apt to look on with an amused smile, where they would formerly have gaped with awe and astonishment.

Then, too, modern science must needs come meddling, and calling things by strange unintelligible names. A woman has taken to behaving queerly, she has fits of moping, alternating with periods of feverish hilarity. There are intervals of unconsciousness accompanied with spasmodic contortions of limbs. She talks at times in a silly incoherent way. Now what explanation can be simpler, than that the poor thing is possessed by an evil spirit, who delights in torturing his victim. And when such an easy solution of the mystery is available, should the learned medicoes insist on bringing in their precious nonsense about hysteria, and functional derangement of the nervous system, and other gibberish, quite unintelligible to the lay mind? When it comes to judging by results, the doctors must admit that the treatment of the disease is often uncertain and disappointing. When drugs prove useless, these sapient disciples of *Æsculapius* fall back upon change of air and scene, and other

expedients with which they are only too familiar. Why not at once admit that they are groping in the dark, and leave the case to the *Panchàxari*?

Suppose, then, the poor sufferer is tired of the doctors, and some wise relative has made an appeal to the worthy medium, and the great man has listened favourably to the suit; suppose also that the necessary preliminaries have been properly settled, and matters are ready for the commencement of the seance. On a low wooden stool squats the medium, arranged before him are a few handfuls of rice, a cocoanut or two, a couple of lemons, a little red pigment, a small quantity of ashes, a stout rattan, and a few coins of the realm. The medium sits silent and pensive. A little fragrant incense is burnt in honour of the spirit. Soon the breath of the man begins to "come and go in quick short gasps. His nostrils expand, his eyes begin to roll, his breathing becomes louder and more spasmodic, until with a deafening yell he rises in a semi-erect attitude, and begins to hiss like half a dozen cobras in chorus. He looks about him with flashing eyes. Then, in a voice like muffled thunder, he asks why he has been called. Now what has happened is exactly this. The benign spirit has deigned to infuse himself in the body of the *Panchàxari*, and having thus secured a convenient medium for holding communion with ordinary mortals, he is there to speak for himself, to listen to the woes of his clients, and to grant such assistance and redress as he may feel inclined to.

Some relative of the poor woman then tells the pitiful tale of misery and suffering. The spirit listens kindly, and offers assistance, provided, of course, promises are

duly made, that his services would receive substantial recognition should he succeed in exorcising the evil one. He then calls on the oppressor in a loud voice to appear. The poor woman who has watched all these strange proceedings, and on whose mind a powerful impression has been made, lends herself readily to the delusion. The evil one speaks through her, and generally consents to take his departure on certain conditions. If he proves recalcitrant, a sound caning suffices to bring him to terms, and on his undertaking to leave, the seance comes to an end. The woman swoons, and presently recovers, and the evil one has left her. The good spirit then gives his blessing, and asks leave to depart. There is a repetition of spasmodic breathing, and the medium falls to the ground insensible. He wakes by-and-by, but has now become an ordinary mortal like others, the great spirit having left his body. A few coins of the realm then change hands, and the medium feels rewarded for his trouble. Now all this may work powerfully on the imagination of the poor woman, she may fancy herself cured, and if there is no real physical mischief, she might make a speedy and satisfactory recovery. Thus one more weighty piece of evidence is added in favour of spiritualism, and to the confusion of the scientific sceptics.

But the *Panchàxari's* experiences are not always of the most delightful. He gets on well enough with the poor superstitious fair ones, but might receive a somewhat rougher and more unpleasant welcome at the hands of the sterner sex. Once whilst a surreptitious seance was proceeding smoothly, the

master of the house, a large and powerful man, and an out-and-out unbeliever, arrived unexpectedly on the scene. He grasped the situation in a moment, and his action was prompt and decisive. He pretended to be possessed by a spirit himself, and, with a deafening war-whoop, sprang right in front of the poor *Panchàxari*, and began to hiss and fume in the most approved style. "Who is this fellow trespassing on my domain?" asked the spirit through the lord of the house. The other remained sullen and silent. A vigorous smack on the cheek, delivered with hearty good-will, caused the courage of the unfortunate *Panchàxari* to give way rather suddenly, and he fairly turned tail, and made a bolt of it, with his powerful rival in hot pursuit. The awe-struck audience were naturally convinced that a spirit more powerful than that of the *Panchàxari* ruled the destinies of the house, and the evil one had no chance any more in that family.

But, perhaps in the near future better luck is in store for the poor native mediums. The tide is turning once more in favour of Spirits, Mahatmas, and Coot-Humis, and if idle fads like these defy science in the West, it would be small wonder if out here Spiritualism should have another lease of life given to it. So the *Panchàxari* might take heart of grace, and bless the benevolent souls, who spread the precious nonsense about clairvoyance, and thought-reading, and other occult things of that sort.

## III.

## THE HINDOO "NOWKER."

THE *Sahib* is fortunate in one respect: he hails from a land where freedom is as the breath of the nostrils. Out here in India he does indeed affect a mild sort of despotism known as Bureaucracy. But then he belongs to the ruling class, and that, perhaps, makes a difference. However this may be, one thing is certain—he owes no allegiance to the grinding tyranny of caste. Besides, he is nothing if not a free-trader. So he draws the domestic contingent in his service freely from all quarters. Caitan from Goa, the man with a pig-tail, the true believer, the low-caste Hindoo, are all equally welcome if they are but cleanly and capable. Fate has been unkind to the poor high-caste Hindoo. With his choice of a *nowker* a hundred things interfere, which have nothing to do with the latter's honesty or aptitude for work. It would not do to import Chang-wang or Bôhea from the "Celestial Empire." Pedro and Ali are alike ineligible. So the field of choice is limited, and as a natural consequence, the demand is ahead of the supply. In Chakmakpore, Baloo from the Konkan has the field almost to himself. His stouter brother from over the Ghauts finds more lucrative and congenial work in moving heavy weights, or perhaps tenderly twisting the tails of a pair of bullocks, to take the laziness out of those phlegmatic animals. It is of Baloo that I wish to speak, of his

joys and sorrows, of his merry pleasantries, and of his foibles and failings.

I have already hinted that our friend is much sought after. Situations are plentiful, and he can afford to pick and choose. If he has been an erring member of society, if in the dim past he has at some time or other been guilty of a little confusion of *meum* and *tuum*, or any other slight weakness of that sort, he need not fear that his future is hopelessly wrecked. There are no inconvenient questions to answer. No enquiry for certificate or references. If he only mends his ways and gets the better of his little infirmities, all will yet be well with him. But to do the poor fellow justice, it is but rarely that he requires the strong arm of the law to keep him on the narrow path of duty.

Now I do not wish to make out that the domestic *nowher* is quite a paragon of perfection. He is aggravating enough in all conscience at times. For just as he has settled down to his work, and has become familiar with the ways of his masters, he might receive news that an aged relative, perhaps a cousin, three degrees removed, is unwell, and away he would run to his native village, leaving his employers to get on as best they may with a raw awkward youth, whom he has thoughtfully provided as a substitute.

Perhaps his master has been a trifle hasty, and has used expressions more forcible than polite. He returns home repentant, and a little out of conceit with himself for the exhibition of temper on his part. He resolves to make it up to the *nowher* by showing a little extra kindness. But that worthy is nowhere in sight. In a secluded corner he has spread his modest bed, and

covered up with his woollen *kambli*, he lies comfortably dreaming such pleasant day-dreams as his simple fancy conjures up. If any members of the household happen to pass by, suppressed groans betray the anguish that racks the poor *nowker's* frame. He has aches all over, and each part of his anatomy seems to have got up a special ailment on its own individual account. Of course it is no case for the doctor, but the *nowker* has had his little revenge.

Again, in the rainy month of September comes his grand annual holiday, the feast of *Gouri*. This is with him a time of rejoicing, the one breath of freedom in his year of incessant toil, the one gleam of poetry that relieves the dull routine of every-day life. So he goes forth with his fellows in all the bravery of new clothes, and bright coloured handkerchiefs, and "trips it on the light fantastic" to the energetic accompaniment of the *tom-tom*. All this is very well, but then this is only the public performance, which requires weeks of anxious rehearsing to make it a success. So for a month or two, night after night, just as the masters are wooing the gentle god, the *tom-tom* rings forth a horrid challenge to the world, and the sonorous, if somewhat unmusical, voices of the *nowkers* keep time to it.

But aggravating as he is, I am inclined to look somewhat leniently on the faults of the domestic *nowker*, for a more patient and willing drudge never was found anywhere. Take him all in all, he is more tractable and useful than his brother John Thomas from across the *Kālāpani*. He is *Dhobi*, *Mhassaji*, and maid-of-all-work rolled in one. His life is not a bed of



roses either. In Chakmakpore he has a fairly good time of it. He gets plenty of food, and fair wages according to his modest ideas. The masters are kind enough, and the work is moderate, so that he is happy as the day is long. His physical comfort is evidenced by a perceptible expansion of the person, a sure sign that life is by no means an intolerable burden. But care does not altogether relax its grip on the poor *nowker's* heart. In his wildest moments of hilarity, he yet remembers the little tumble-down hut away in his native village. "There are his young barbarians all at play." There is their dusky mother. There, too, are his aged parents and his younger brothers, quite a happy family, three generations living peacefully side by side. Things may be well enough with him. He has enough of food and to spare. He may even be in a position to extend casual hospitality to a poor friend out of work. But things are far from well with them at home. If Dame Nature is unkind, and if timely rain does not pour its welcome and fructifying deluge on the arid soil, a full hearty meal might become a rarity, a something to be remembered with a grateful sigh for many a long day thereafter. Then again at times there is the benevolent *sowcar*, who bears them an exceeding love, but nevertheless keeps his weather eye open, and whose modest claims must be met withal, or it might be the worse for the poor people. Every pice the *nowker* can save, every hard-earned rupee, goes to his needy brethren at home, but even thus matters are far from well with them. Of course, here and there you may come across a wild fellow, who thinks more of his vices than of his starving family—such black sheep are to be

met with everywhere—but they are the exceptions that prove the rule.

Now there are those who say all sorts of unkind things about the natives of India. I do not feel disposed to argue with these worthy people. They have no doubt succeeded in fixing the location in the human body of our unpleasant heritage of “original sin,” and have somehow or other come to associate it with the *Pigmentum nigrum*. However that may be, this I know—that, though wanting in the sterner virtues which give man power over his brother man, for patient suffering, for charity, for love of kith and kin, for kindness to God’s dumb creatures, the poor Indian need not fear comparison with his fellow-man either here or elsewhere.

## IV.

## THE PARSEE GIRL OF THE PERIOD.

SHE is unmistakably pretty and stylish, this fair worshipper of the sun. She has a good eye for colour. Her *saree* is far and away the loveliest thing out in silks. The natty little slippers, that satisfied her sisters a couple of decades ago, have in the course of evolution developed into the latest importation in kids and high heels. Nature has been kind to these fair daughters of Persia, but blind unreasoning custom, aided and abetted by unemotional and, perhaps, over-cautious ancestors, condemns them to hide away their dark tresses, woman's crown of glory, beneath a snowy veil. Now this veil is not always an unmixed evil. When the bloom of youth is over; and the locks have lost their former luxuriance, and show here and there in silver streaks the unmistakable marks of time, the friendly concealment afforded by the veil is most convenient. But in the first blush of youth, in the full glory of all her charms, it is outrageous cruelty to condemn the fair maiden to conceal her greatest. Even the Hindoo is unkind only to the poor widow, and permits her more fortunate sisters to weave their lovely tresses into many a curious shape. Custom in the East is an unyielding tyrant, but the fair followers of Zoroaster are pluckily fighting their way to liberty. Already have these hideous *matha-bandhs* contracted visibly in size, and afford more than glimpses of the

glories that lie hidden beyond. All the skill of the hair-dresser is spent over the few truant locks, that peep beyond the line of eternal snow.

She goes to school, this sweet Parsee maiden. She can read and write the vernacular fairly well. Often she has more than a mere smattering of English. She may even venture to tackle the irregular French verbs with more or less success. She is musical. She has learnt to play on the piano. More fortunate than her fair sisters from Europe, she has the treasures of song in the East as well as the West open to her. When so minded, she can form a ring with other girls and to the monotonous clapping of hands sing the *Gharbàs* of Guzerat. On the other hand, I believe she gets the latest music regularly from the publishers in Europe.

She is almost ubiquitous. There is no respectable place of amusement which she does not honour with her presence. Twice a week at the representations of popular Guzerati plays the dress circle is filled with a fair and appreciative audience. There is rustling of silk, and subdued whispers and merriment, and the flashing of diamonds, and of something brighter than diamonds, whilst the attention of susceptible people is sadly distracted from the stage.

Then there is the daily drive or walk to take the air. Along the foreshore, where the fresh cool breezes blow, vigorous inhalation of the pure air charged with ozone is a health-giving and delectable occupation, and if at the same time one can manage to see the latest thing in dresses, and pick up an idea or two, whilst one is conscious of looking to advantage in the

new love of a *Saree*, where can be the possible harm in that?

At the great cricket matches played on the *Maidan* between the followers of Zoroaster and picked elevens from various parts of India, or visitors from Europe, the fair maidens of Iran assemble in numbers to witness the performances of the Parsee knights of the willow. The success of the Parsees at this manly game is due not a little to the warm interest taken by the fair. Whether he handles the willow, or tries his skill with the leather, or scouts on the field, the youthful worshipper of the sun knows that a hundred bright eyes are looking on. Fair hands will clap approval when he scores a success. Should defeat and disappointment be his lot, he is sure of kindly sympathy. Under these favouring conditions, there is small wonder that he has left his other native competitors far behind in the race.

Now there are a few ultra-conservative folk who affect to see in all this much to be deplored, much that is fraught with evil to the well-being of the race. One is apt to lose one's patience with these lugubrious prophets of evil. They seem to think that ignorance is the natural and healthy condition for the mind of woman, and that the least culture and education are sure to upset the balance, and lead to unpleasant consequences. There are others, who, whilst admitting the benefits arising from the civilizing influences at work, view with anxiety the eager pursuit of fashion and finery. To an outsider the state of things appears to be just what would be expected from the natural reaction of Western ideas and Western

civilization on a people who are not tied down too strongly to old-fangled notions, and who do not find it difficult to pick up a lesson or two in fashion from their rulers. The girl of the period wins a good deal of admiration; but this is largely tempered with other feelings in the case of the happy individual, who has to settle her dressmaker's and jeweller's little bills.

The Parsee girl is clever, pretty, and delightfully piquant. What more could man desire? One would expect that the Parsee youth is content to take her as she is, and be thankful. But, alas! for the contrariety of human affairs. The inexorable laws of demand and supply are against the fair flower of Iran. Eligible young men are not over-plentiful, and not always disposed to under-rate their own value in the matrimonial market. They are not insensible to the charms of the fair maidens. Quite the contrary. But they show no eager haste to take them for better or worse unless accompanied with something more substantial, and less liable to the withering influences of time than mere beauty. So poor *Paterfamilias* with a limited income does not find half a dozen fair olive branches an unmixed blessing. To see them grow to womanhood waiting for suitors, who fail to appear, is galling to Oriental ideas. To yield to extortionate demands for dowry spells ruin, or something very near to it. Surely, the life of a poor father under these circumstances is not a bed of roses.

With all her gay smiles, and merry laughter, and bright *sarees*, the prospects of the poor Parsee girl are not always of the rosiest. Man, who is

proverbially selfish, seems hardly disposed to treat her with much liberality. So, with the true courage of womanhood, she tries, what self-reliance and honest industry can do for her. She sews, she embroiders, she goes in for teaching. Even the fear of the dissecting room does not keep her out of the Medical profession. In fact, she strives after honourable independence, and often succeeds. But to the credit of Parsee humanity be it said, that she is not left to fight her battle alone. A band of chivalrous young men have formed themselves into a society for fighting down the mercenary bargaining of the matrimonial market. Whether they will succeed or not, time alone can show, but in the meanwhile all right-minded people will wish them good luck.

## V.

## THE POORANIK.

HE is the connecting link between ancient and modern life. He is always brooding over the rich stores of Indian mythology. He identifies himself with the good old days gone by. Saints, heroes, and incarnations form the subject of his contemplation, the theme of his discourse. He lives in this sinful age of *Kali*, but imagination carries him on golden wings to the happy time, when sin and sorrow dwelt not on this earth, or dwelt only in an attenuated microscopic form. In those halcyon days, the ancient sages lived a life of purity and penance. Kings bowed to the very dust before them. Even the great gods on the Indian Olympus trembled at their frown. Their curse carried desolation in its wake, to be relieved only by a merciful revocation, or a conditional pardon. Of course now and then a powerful *Asura* defied gods and men, and led these peaceful devotees a pretty hard life of it for a time. But in the end good triumphed over evil, some kind Power came to the rescue, and the oppressor was overthrown. Those were glorious times for the Brahmins, and they were as happy as it is possible to be in this vale of tears.

In these days of steam and iron, of soda-water and *Brandy-pawnee*, who cares for the descendants of the old sages? Fast and vigil, *Pooja* and *Wrata*, have lost their charm for the popular mind. The belief in a hereafter



is tottering to its very foundations, and the craving for the good things of this world is proportionately on the increase. The pious contemplation of the "Written Word" brings in but little into the empty exchequer, and the lay mind turns instinctively to the *Bilatee* learning as a sure stepping-stone to the successful pursuit of wealth. The toothsome dainties and the delectable brews of the West draw many an erring soul from the ascetic discipline of the *Shasters*. Western thought and Western ideals have supplanted the "pale relics of a by-gone civilisation."

But even in this sinful age of *Kali*, a few faithful souls are yet left, who cling lovingly to the dim memories of the past. Modern civilisation seeks in vain to draw them in her ever-increasing fold, the voice of the syren has no charm for their ears. Science is to them unintelligible gibberish, or impudent blasphemy. Modern hopes and modern aspirations touch no sympathetic chord within their breasts: Their fidelity to the ancient faith is unshaken. It defies the scoffs of the sceptic, it resists the benevolent sarcasm of the foreigner. To their simple minds, ablution and fast are potent agencies for temporal good, gifts to the Brahmins an almost plenary atonement for sin and wrong, and a pilgrimage to holy shrines the most 'praiseworthy ambition of life.

To these sympathetic souls the *Pooranik* opens the treasures of sacred verse. He reads the Sanskrit text, and expounds its precious meaning in the vernacular. He amplifies the original with a running commentary of his own. He illustrates it with parables drawn from daily life. He expatiates on the prowess of the heroes.

He dwells lovingly on the privileges of the Brahmins. He ~~pluffs~~ with virtuous indignation, when he recounts the wicked deeds of some enemy of gods and men. The sufferings of the poor sages and ascetics move him to tears, and his voice swells with exultation when at last the bold miscreant receives the due reward of his sins.

Reciter and audience live peacefully in a little world of their own. They hear not the shriek of the railway engine. The rough accents of the foreigner's tongue fall unnoticed on their ears. Their peaceful visions are undisturbed by the aggressive swagger and maudlin hiccough of bibulous youth. For the time at least they are blissfully unconscious of the evil doings of the dread *Kali*. They see the India of the past, the India of the ancient Aryans ere yet the conquering Moslem trod on its fertile soil.

In every temple of some pretensions a seat is usually reserved for the *Pooranik*. A capacious bench, with an old-fashioned back, accommodates both himself and his *Poathee*. There he sits in state with the leaves of the sacred book spread out before him. One by one his audience drop in. They approach the chair, bow to the holy man, place their little offerings before him, and squat in a circle on the ground. Nothing is too humble for acceptance. Fruits and coppers are equally welcome, and as a last resource even a handful of rice suffices to ease the conscience of the listener, and helps to fill the almost empty larder of the *Pooranik*.

By-and-by the discourse begins. A metrical prayer in Sanskrit of decent length is offered to the gods, and the work commences in good earnest. Verse

and, explanation are alike rendered in an unvaried sing-song tone. For a time the whole audience listens with commendable diligence. Not a syllable of the somewhat redundant words and phrases escapes them. But after a time, the heat and previous hard work relax the energies of some, and they are soon in a blissful state of unconsciousness. No one takes the least notice of these sleepy souls, unless one of them begins to give audible expression to the inward joy by sundry inharmonious noises arising from forcible inhalation of the air through the nasal passages. Then a sympathetic neighbour rouses the culprit, and considerately hands him a snuff-box for a vigorous pinch of that harmless stimulant. Thus matters progress cheerfully until the stipulated time is over, and *Pooranik* and audience disperse with much good feeling, and with the consciousness of having done their duty, and deserved well of the powers that be.

The closing day of a course of such recitals is a time for much rejoicing, and a display of religious enthusiasm. It is also the long-looked-for opportunity, when the poor *Pooranik* expects to receive the reward of his protracted labours. The people, who have profited by his edifying discourse, muster strong on the occasion, and bring their relations and friends, and every one else whom they can induce to accompany them. The *Pooranik* is decked out in flowers. A rich man presents him with a new *puggree*, another gives him a fine *Dhotee*, and so he is enabled to make a brave show. Then begins the real business of the day. A large plate is displayed conspicuously before the holy man, and into this each one drops his little present of much-needed

coin of the realm. If the collection is satisfactory, the poor man secures enough to keep him going for some time to come.

But unless he is fortunate enough to secure the patronage of the rich and liberal men of Guzerat, the prospects of the *Pooranik* are not too bright. He, who is constantly reading of the fabulous wealth of the ancient princes has to haggle for a few coppers over every article he purchases in the bazaar. After describing, in thrilling language, the sumptuous feasts given to the Brahmins, he goes to his humble home to partake of such hard fare as his limited means afford. With his mind filled with glowing accounts of the liberality of the faithful in the golden ages, he has to accept with such cheerfulness as he can muster the few coppers grudgingly bestowed by the close-fisted patron of these degenerate days. But hard as is his present lot, the future holds out no hope to him. The number of the orthodox is constantly diminishing, and the time may come when he must either starve, or stoop to uncanonical labour with his holy hands.

## VI. THE BEGGAR.

INDIA is the paradise of beggars. The genus is found in wonderful luxuriance, with a bewildering profusion of varieties. As regards distribution, Nature for once has been unusually impartial, and scattered specimens far and wide with an even hand. Holy places and the larger cities have, perhaps, more than their fair share, but otherwise there is little to complain of. With such richness of material, an attempt at exhaustive classification might prove futile. Roughly speaking, however, there are four or five broad divisions, under which the minor species arrange themselves.

First, there is the beggar with some physical defect or deformity. He always nurses it with tender solicitude. He is evidently very proud of it. Should you have failed to notice it, he draws your attention to it with a perseverance that would take no denial, for it is the one unanswerable argument with which he appeals to your softer feelings. But one cannot find it in his heart to be hard on these poor people, for those to whom Nature has been unkind, those whom she has failed to equip fairly for the hard battle of life, whom she has seriously handicapped in the race, which is for the swiftest alone, are just the very persons who have a claim on our sympathies. And how hard is the lot of some of these poor souls! Here is one who has lost his eyes. He rolls his sightless optics

with the vague restless motion of the blind, and fixes them on vacuity. The tropical world with all its wealth of gorgeous colour is nothing to him. The fierce rays of the blazing sun pierce not the dense mist that hangs around him. A little child guides his faltering steps, and together the unhappy pair move from door to door.

Here again is one whom Nature has sent out into the world with only the rudiments of a limb. Yet another is the victim of that terrible disease, which slowly eats its way from the extremities to the vitals, and in whose terrible and resistless progress the corrupted flesh peels off, leaving unsightly stumps behind. Misery such as this must appeal to all hearts. But we can also readily understand, that a poor man with a limited amount of spare cash may feel a decided objection to demands for help made in season and out of season. Moreover, if he elects to remain obdurate, he is by no means pleased to listen to audible remarks of a personal character, which are far from complimentary to him.

Then there is the religious beggar. The *Bairagee*, *et hoc genus omne*. He is generally a large and healthy specimen of humanity, rather inclined to stoutness than otherwise. Religion, after saturating his holy person, seems to have filtered out in a profusion of external marks. He goes about dressed in clothes of a holy dye, though at times he is not overburdened with these either. His locks, innocent of the comb or scissors, grow in wild profusion, and lend a weird aspect to his face. His person is frequently covered with a plentiful deposit of ashes. He is for ever going on a

pilgrimage to holy places, or has just arrived from some distant shrine. In either case, he condescends to put it in the power of believers, all and sundry, to improve their prospects in the world to come, by the timely bestowal of a trifle on one so holy, so worthy in the sight of Heaven. He does not supplicate. Why should he? Surely, a loud blessing *Betà, terà bhalà ho jai* (son, may the world prosper with thee) ought to be enough, or even if that were to fail, the pointed suggestion, *Sàdhu bhukhe hai* (the holy man is in need of refreshments) cannot be misunderstood. You, however, stand unmoved, and are even irreverent enough to suggest that a little honest work will do him no harm. With a gesture of infinite contempt, the holy man leaves you with muttered remarks, which are certainly not blessings.

Amongst much spurious coin one may come across a grain of sterling metal now and then. A man weary of the vanities of the world, and desirous of serving his Creator in his own humble way, may renounce wealth and pomp, and elect to live on alms gathered from door to door. The great Goutama Budha was a prince before he voluntarily became a beggar, and in the land of his birth a few there may be even now, who really and truly live a life of purity and lowliness. But this refined type of the religious mendicant is rare indeed, and not apt to obtrude itself, whilst the coarser counterfeit is to employ a little pardonable hyperbole, as plentiful as the grains of sand.

Next we have the beggar born to the craft. Far as the memory of man can go back, his illustrious ancestors have ever proved themselves worthy members

of the guild. He, their proud descendant, is determined to bring no blot on the family escutcheon. Should he be blessed with olive branches, you may be sure that no pains will be spared to bring them up to be respected pensioners on the bounty of the inferior classes, who demean themselves by working for their daily bread.

The pertinacity with which the hereditary beggar sticks to you makes him master of the situation. He will never take a refusal, at least as long as he can help it. You quietly ask him to go away, he remains immovable. You order him in a more peremptory tone to begone, he calmly resumes his importunities. You storm, you rave, you threaten him with terrors unheard of, you consign his soul to perdition. He remains cool and undisturbed, and begs you in the most blood-curdling tone to give him a copper. At last exhausted, and overcome, and determined to get rid of him at any price you fling him a small coin. With an inward chuckle, but with a profound *salaam* he picks up the coveted prize, and beats a hasty retreat.

Lastly comes a division, which is rather mixed—the *etcetera* of our classification. Here you have the never-do-well, who has been started in life by his friends on half-a-dozen separate occasions, and has, like the proverbial bad coin, returned on their hands with persistent regularity. Having succeeded in exhausting their liberality, he is now making experiments in taxing that of the world in general. Here again is the porter, who once earned his bread by the honest sweat of his brow, and was a worthy, though somewhat humble member of society. A long spell of illness



proved the turning point in his career, for stern necessity forced him to stow away his pride, and stoop to soliciting alms. He hesitated long before he fell—fell never to return again to a life of irksome labour. The pleasant ease of the new life was too tempting. He is now comparatively hale and hearty, but to feign illness is easy, and the wish for independence is gone.

But in all this motley crowd, where are the real and deserving objects of charity, the brave men and women, and even children, who keep up the desperate struggle with poverty and want to the bitter end? Where are the noble heroes and heroines of the battle of life? If they are to be found in other climes, they are surely not wanting in India. But here, as elsewhere, they are too proud, too patient, too self-reliant, too retiring, to obtrude their woes on the notice of unsympathising strangers. While those who really deserve help rarely receive it, a whole host of lazy and thoroughly useless drones are fattened, and pampered to their own degradation and ultimate ruin.

## VII.

## THE PARIAH-DOG.

Dogs of pure breed are comparatively rare in India. Many even of the four-footed friends of the *Sahēb* have a taint of indigenous blood. But it would be rank heresy to class these as mongrels. To question the pedigree of the dog is to give mortal offence to the proud owner, so that the task of judges at an exhibition becomes a somewhat invidious one. One thing, however, is certain—that such exhibits do not belong to the numerous family of *Pariahs*, though the purity of their descent may be successfully impugned. They have kind masters. They have more or less of good blood in their veins, and here, among their canine rivals, they enjoy all the privileges of *pukka-born* Britons. The true *Pariah* is the loafer of the streets—the dog without an owner. Even if there be an individual, who might by courtesy be allowed to have a shadowy claim of suzerainty over the wretched animal, the interest he takes in his four-footed dependent is of the slightest. The little dole he occasionally condescends to bestow on the poor creature must needs be supplemented by foraging expeditions in the neighbourhood, if it wishes to escape starvation.

The *Pariah* is of all sorts and sizes—long and short, large and small, stout and lean, shaggy and smooth-coated. The poor brute might be intelligent and well-behaved. Yet having no home and no friends, and being thus without any visible means of subsistence, he is only a *Pariah*. Indian villages and towns abound with

these canine waifs. Every street has its contingent of four-footed musicians, who are tolerated with a patience quite unintelligible to the European.

Now the *Pariah* dog is objectionable in more ways than one. He is bellicose within the limits of proper prudence. If a large and powerful adversary happens to come along, he deems it advisable to execute a hasty movement to the rear with his tail safely lodged between his hind-legs. Once at a safe distance, there is nothing to prevent his turning round, and yelling a hoarse challenge to the intruder. But he makes no attempt to lessen the distance which separates him from his dangerous rival. Should, on the other hand, a weaker animal venture to approach too closely, the *Pariah* falls upon him and sends him yelping and groaning away.

At night the *Pariah* is disposed to be over-suspicious, and greets the least movement in the streets with a disapproving growl. If nothing further happens, well and good. But if the trespasser persists in his intrusion, the dog sets up a howl, which is taken up by the whole four-footed community far and near. The concert is kept up with untiring energy, until the unlucky cause of it either beats a precipitate retreat or finds shelter behind some friendly door, hastily opened for his entrance. Till either of these much-desired events takes place, the peace of the whole neighbourhood is disturbed, and people suddenly aroused from their sweet slumbers call down anything but blessings on the head of the unfortunate man and the canine serenaders.

Then again, the four-footed reprobate is apt to pick up unmentionable abominations, and drop them in odd places and corners, after appropriating any edible

stuff there may be about them. A poor vegetarian Brahmin might thus find a few greasy bones, or the rotting remains of deceased fishes reposing peacefully in front of his door. The mere touch of these vile things means untold pollution, which can scarce be washed away without a careful bath, and frequent cleaning of the clothes. Imagine the feelings of the poor soul when, in addition to these unpleasant contingencies, there is the chance of painful doubts being felt by his neighbours as to the orthodox nature of what he has had for his dinner.

The dog is very particular about his bed, and if the surface of the ground does not suit his somewhat fastidious taste, he does not hesitate to use his nails vigorously in making the desired alterations. Of course, after he has had his little siesta, the ground is left with many an unsightly depression. But what does he care for that? It is none of his business.

Then there is the dread disease, which makes him an object of horror to man and beast. This is a calamity to him and his tribe, for it almost justifies the yearly crusade against these luckless creatures, who are given up to almost indiscriminate slaughter if found straying in the streets. Other animals have a close time provided by law, when it is a crime to take their life. The poor *Pariah* has a time fixed by the powers that be, when he is sacrificed to the demon of fear, whether innocent or guilty.

Lastly, it must be admitted that he is sometimes driven by the cravings of hunger to forget his honesty, and to appropriate any edibles that come in his way, without pausing to settle nice questions of ownership

and morality. But the poor wretch is hardly to blame in the circumstances, and it is more his misfortune than his fault. Anyhow, he is a far safer neighbour than his feline rival for the favour of man. The latter creature is a born thief, and is admirably fitted out by Nature for its nefarious operations.

But with all his short-comings, we should feel kindly towards the despised *Pariah*. Almost from the earliest puppy-hood, he is thrown on the tender mercies of an unsympathising world. By his friends (!) he is barely tolerated as a nuisance, which they would gladly get rid of, but for fear of the holy *Shasters*. His enemies are many, and eager to put an untimely end to his existence. The guardians of the public tempt him with alluring lumps of flesh charged with deadly doses of strychnine. The well-meaning people of the *Pinjrapole* are, indeed, ready to welcome him to the shelter of their charitable home. But the poor creature cannot be expected to be overpleased with, what virtually amounts to incarceration for life, with others of his tribe in various stages of disease and decrepitude to keep him company.

With such dangers besetting the troublous path of life, it is small wonder that the *Pariah* is over-suspicious. His friends are few, his enemies many. So he is ever on the watch for the slightest indication of hostility, and nothing escapes his eye. If you stoop to pick up a thing you have dropped, you might perhaps be collecting stones to open fire on him at a suitable opportunity. If you accidentally raise your hand or stick, your motive is open to serious question. So the *Pariah* retires to a safe distance, and denounces you in language loud and forcible.

The life of a *Pariah* is at best but a pitiful struggle for existence. But when a female has to bring up a numerous family of small blind puppies, the burden is almost too hard to sustain. Exhausted nature makes loud and frequent calls for nourishment. Maternal solicitude forbids long absence from the helpless offspring. Between these opposite claims the poor creature is apt to get quite distracted. Kind-hearted people may help the poor needy family with a few crumbs now and then. Or else they may find themselves safely lodged in the van, which takes them to the *Pinjrapole*. But failing these contingencies, they must shift as best they may, and their experiences of this beautiful world of ours are none of the pleasantest. Surely, in all this, there is much to awaken our better feelings. The *Pariah* may be but an irrational brute, but he shares with us the wonderful mystery of existence, and has the same capacity for happiness and suffering as we ourselves with all our boasted superiority.

## VIII.

## THE STREET PERFORMERS.

THE itinerant performer is not a beggar. I am aware that he is not an universal favourite. There are many excellent persons who affect to look down upon him, but he is popular with the children, who never fail to gather around him in crowds whenever he pays them a visit. Now some may think him clever, others may vote him a nuisance, but one thing is certain—he does not live on charity. He gives *quid pro quo* for the money he receives, in the entertainment which he provides. True, the poor man's toilette is rather primitive, and not always very scrupulously clean. True, he is needy, and therefore apt to be rather importunate, and may insist on giving a performance when you are not disposed to play the part of spectator. But though his efforts to please may fail, he remains, what he undoubtedly is, a showman in reduced circumstances.

The performers are a numerous class, and include practitioners of various crafts, from snake-charming downwards. To begin with, we have the *Garoodi*, who combines in his person the somewhat distinct professions of juggler and snake-charmer. His list of apparatus is rather limited, and the collective value, all told, insignificant. His live-stock consists of a few healthy specimens of the *Cobra-de-Capello*, a youthful boa, one or two small harmless reptiles, and a lively mongoose. The cobras look very fierce, and

hiss with remarkable energy, and with expanded hood offer to strike all and sundry. But they are harmless enough, poor creatures, though the performer pretends otherwise, a slight dental operation having deprived them for the time of the dangerous power to kill. The *Garoodi* has usually a couple of assistants. One a diminutive fellow yclept *Handibal*, who assists in the comic business, and keeps up a lively exchange of repartee with the performer, the latter generally getting the worst of it. The other fellow is usually an old man, whose energetic performance on a primitive drum serves the double purpose of attracting an audience from far and near, and keeping up a sort of orchestral accompaniment to the performance. As to the merits of the performance itself, opinions differ. Some would have it that it borders at times on the marvellous. Others maintain that a fourth-rate performer from Europe would blush to exhibit such clumsy tricks. However that may be, the thing, such as it is, has pleased the simple audiences for whom it is intended from time immemorial, and the day is yet far distant, when the *Garoodi's* little friends will fail to respond liberally to his familiar appeal for coppers.

Then there is the man with the monkeys. He has usually three of these funny creatures, forming quite a happy family by themselves. There is old Paterfamilias, a large-bodied truculent rogue, who, if his master will only let him, is anxious to maintain in his family circle the severe discipline of patriarchal times. Next comes his better or lesser half, a milder and more tractable creature than her lord and master. The



furtive and frightened glances she casts in the direction of her rough partner, and the eager haste she makes to get out of his way, show clearly that her experience of domestic bliss is none of the pleasantest. Lastly we have young master hopeful, a merry irrepressible fellow, ever up to mischief, ever getting into trouble, and ever getting out of it by the skin of his teeth. Even the dignity of the old *Pater* is not safe from irreverent liberties on the part of his frivolous descendant, who trusts to his agility and the friendly interference of the master to escape well-deserved punishment at the paternal hands. Another victim of the mercurial temperament of the young scamp is the poor patient goat, who serves as a charger to the sire when the latter prepares to go to the wars.

Next we have a funny group who generally give a performance at night. An iron ladle filled with oil, and having a large cotton wick, forms a primitive lamp, and serves to illumine the extempore stage. The performers are a couple of fair athletes, who compete for the favour of a youthful swain. The poor rustic cannot for the life of him decide between their rival claims. He begins to think "how happy he would be with either, were the other dear charmer away," but nevertheless endeavours to do his best under the circumstances. He sets each fair admirer in her turn to do the most difficult feats, and himself assumes the roll of judge. At the end of each effort, he declares with charming *naïveté*, that such a poor performance can never win his approval. So the game goes merrily on, and when the collection is made, the unchivalrous wight comes in for a share of the coppers.

Lastly we have the Asiatic rivals of Mons. Blondin. Now, it goes without saying that for grandness of effect, the well-to-do European performer leaves his native rival far behind. But a kindly critic will not fail to remember the poverty of the poor Indian, and will readily admit that the humbler performance requires the same cool and steady nerve, the same incessant practice, the same patience and perseverance, which enable the Western exponent of the art to hold his audience spell-bound with wonder and delight.

A host of minor performers remain, and their name is legion. But I hope I have said enough to rescue these poor people from the charge of belonging to the numerous host, "who toil not, neither do they spin," but who nevertheless manage to thrive exceedingly, and lead happy and contented lives at the expense of their soft-hearted and, perhaps, somewhat soft-headed neighbours.

## IX. THE PANI-BHAT.

INDIA is a thirsty country, the ardent sun causes both Native and European alike, to deliquesce profusely and incessantly. With the fluids thus oozing out of the system, it is scarcely wonderful that the bibulous powers are at their highest, and the craving for liquids almost insatiable. The convivial souls, who care a fico for the *Shasters*, and hold "Blue Ribbon" in unmitigated contempt, refresh themselves with copious draughts of Beer, and Pale Ale, and India's popular drink—iced *Brandy-Pawni*. Others again imbibe the cooling emulsions of a curious weed, growing wild out here, which is called by the learned *Canabis Indica*, but which is known to the children of the soil by the shorter but more familiar name of *Bhàng*. This precious weed has many and remarkable properties, which have won for it the expressive epithet "the tree of knowledge." To the novice it is productive of a dry throat, and various other symptoms of an unpleasant nature, besides making him the victim of strange hallucinations, and causing him to talk and act in a silly, maudlin way. But the adept draws from its subtle influence inspirations of a highly edifying character. People with a less ambitious turn of mind content themselves with "the cup that cheers but not inebriates." Some are fond of the delicious sherbets of Iran. But a vast majority prefer the somewhat thin but withal cooling and satisfying beverage provided by Nature.

No graceful Hebe fills the sparkling cup for these unfashionable but thirsty souls. But the *Pani-Bhat* pours out for them the crystal fluid, and they are content. A most useful and popular individual is this *Pani-Bhat*. His stock-in-trade is not large. A few earthen pots, a can or two of copper, a few small vessels of the same metal are quite sufficient to set him up in business. If he is of an enterprising spirit, he may lay in a stock of *mesur* and *halwa*, for these sweets have the double property of being acceptable to the most orthodox, and keeping fresh and saleable for a long time. Thus equipped, the industrious man caters for the hungry as well as the thirsty, and turns many an honest pice, and is happy.

Now for the scene of his labours. Large establishments that keep a contingent of native employees have generally a corner for the *Pani-Bhat*. But here he is not seen in his glory. An oppressive sense of subordination keeps him within the strict limits of business. He is respectful but not communicative, attentive but not humorous. But see him established under a convenient tree by the road side, or better still, in his own modest saloon, and you find him at his best. Here he owes allegiance to no man. He is deferential to all, it is true, but it is the deference which a tradesman shows to his customers. A proper sense of his own dignity lends an additional charm to his genial welcome. His most liberal patrons are the orthodox, but rich and influential members of the native mercantile community. These over-scrupulous people take nothing stronger than a decoction of the scented leaf from China, or the fragrant

berry from Arabia, and their permissible dietary of animal food is strictly confined to milk and its oleaginous derivatives. In situations such as these, the *Pani-Bhat* may extend his business in various directions and grow rich, at the same time laying on his person a suitable deposit of adipose tissue.

The *Pani-Bhat* hails from Guzerat, and has all the active and thrifty habits of his race. His love for lucre is great, but to do him justice, he fairly earns it by the sweat of his brow. True, he remembers now and then, especially on big holidays, that he is a Brahmin, and is not above the weakness of asking for, and accepting a little *daxina*. But this is generally only when he is poor, and even then it represents only a small part of his earnings. He is an industrious man. His public labours occupy him during the usual business hours in the city. His mornings and evenings are his own. But it must not be imagined that he spends them in indolence and ease. He reserves them for his private patrons, for whom he draws water from the wells, carries it up three pair of stairs, or performs other services of a like nature.

With industry like this, combined with the strictest economy, he gets on in life, and in a few years manages to lay by enough to enable him to return to his native village with a modest competence.

The *Pani-Bhat* is gregarious in his habits, and settles down in large numbers in suitable localities. He generally affects the neighbourhood of temples, for he is nothing if not religious. These colonies of the disciples of Aquarius consist almost exclusively of the

members of the sterner sex, for their better halves and children are generally far away in Guzerat.

I have said that the life of the *Pani-Bhat* is one of incessant toil. But it must not be imagined that there are no moments when he lays aside the dull cares of life, and, lifting up his mind above the hum-drum of ordinary routine, yields his soul to prayers and recreation. At such times he is not a desirable neighbour. For the prayers are loud, if not quite musical, and a hundred rough voices swell the chorus, and the clashing of cymbals and clapping of hands create a din, which is calculated to drive a poor peace-loving citizen, with sensitive nerves, to the last verge of despair. This interesting performance may be kept up far into the night, to the production of much profanity and strong language among the poor victims.

Even in his recreations our water-bearing friend is scarcely less noisy. A large ring is formed. Each one arms himself with a pair of sticks, one in either hand, and the sport begins. The men move in and out, and turn round and round, in curious mazes, keeping time to the beating of the drum with the clash of sticks, each one striking that of his neighbour with the deafening refrain "*Ha re Ha.*"

Now a foreigner might fairly ask, whether in these benighted cities there are no regulations to secure to the peace-loving householder the undisturbed quiet which he has a right to enjoy. The answer is that out here in the East we stand not always so jealously on our rights, and "live and let live" is our motto, though it often entails a little sacrifice of personal comfort. So the noisy demonstrations of the *Pani-Bhats* are tolerated

with patience, and even goodwill, and a hard-worked and, on the whole, useful class of citizens have their little fun and are happy.

## X.

## THE IRRITABLE SAHEB.

THE average Briton is a law-abiding being. If there is one trait in his character more marked than another, it is a peculiar reverence for the law, which he himself has helped to make, and which derives its main strength and prestige from the implicit obedience he yields to it. If with a slightly bilious temperament, and the uncongenial weather of the tropics, and one thing or another there is a little superfluous caloric, he generally manages to work this off in ways that are perfectly safe and harmless to others.

He goes in for cricket, and keeps at the delightful game in the broiling sun, alternately handling the willow and doing the leather-hunting, until, to a mild philistine like myself, who has managed to keep cool and comfortable under the friendly shelter of canvas, he looks within an ace of sunstroke. But, bless you, he is only enjoying himself, and feels all the better and healthier for the exercise.

Anon you will find him mounted upon a fleet and sturdy *tattoo*, riding, stick-in-hand, across the *maidan* for very life as it were, his sole ambition for the moment being to drive a small white ball between two flag-poles. One might fancy that the pony did not get as much of fun out of the affair as the master. But the bright eye and smart appearance of the animal do not suggest a life of hardship. Then again there is a cherub some-



where, which watches over his interests. A society with an inconveniently long name, but a useful society withal, takes all dumb animals metaphorically under its wings, and with *Bayls*, and hack-horses, and others of that tribe, the polo pony may come in, if need be, for a share of its solicitude.

Again there is football, and golf, and if one is content with a little milder excitement, with the added benefit of the society of the fairer sex, there is tennis and yachting. Now all this is excellent in its way, and is calculated to reduce man to that happy frame of mind, which keeps him perfectly satisfied with himself, and disposed to remain on the most pleasant terms with every one else. But even in the best ordered society there are always individuals, who cause some trouble and anxiety. So among the *Gora-logues* a few specimens of the genus "irritable" are now and then cropping up, who find it difficult to put a stopper on the phials of their wrath, and who seek satisfaction for some real or fancied wrong by the infliction of personal chastisement on the offender.

Now if the discipline administered has been slight, and the victim happens to be a *nowker*, no great harm is done. For the Indian *nowker* is proverbially patient, and usually bears no ill-will, for what he takes to be only a little pleasantry on the part of the *Saheb*. By and by, when the master has had time to cool down a little, and begins to think he has gone a trifle too far, and feels besides some uncomfortable twinges of conscience, he can set things straight by the bestowal of a little *baxis*, and thenceforward nothing more need be said about the matter.

## THE IRRITABLE SAHEB.

But it is not always possible to get off so lightly, for often the fist of the Briton is heavy, and the frame of the native comparatively fragile. There is besides the possibility of the wretched individual carrying somewhere in that spare anatomy of his an inconvenient thing called a "diseased spleen." Then, of course, there is a row, and there is no knowing how or when it may end. Public sympathy, at least the sympathy of his compatriots, is consistently on the side of the crring pugilist. But the native papers are apt to get fussy, and give a deal of trouble. It may even happen that a "sentimental" Viceroy is inclined to be nast—well, rather unpleasant over the matter, visiting with official wrath the poor trying Magistrate, who has a somewhat delicate task to perform, and who certainly deserves commiseration, rather than censure.

Sometimes when he is out in the mofussil, the irritable *Sahab* may be tempted to touch up a respectable Aryan brother with some such trifle as a riding-whip, or walking-stick, or something else equally handy and pleasant. This is rather a risky game. For, alas! the days of *jo hookum* are passing away, the sections of the Code are dangerously wide, and the facilities for invoking the strong arm of the law ridiculously great. Now to the average human mind nothing is so unpleasant as to be made the subject of *Foujdari* process. Moreover to be handed down to legal tradition, in connection with the interesting case of *Empress vs. Irritable*, is a little galling to one's feelings. And to think that all this would have been avoided by a little wise self-restraint. Bah! it is no use crying over spilt milk.

The Magistrate is polite and sympathetic, but he

must do his duty. So he names a moderate sum, which must be paid into the public treasury. The proper number of coins of the realm are duly tendered, and the *Saheb* breathes freely once more, a load lifted from his mind.

But he is not yet quite safe out of the woods. He should not make sure of having heard the last of the wretched affair. He might have to reckon with the *Fouzdari Adawlat*. Far away by the side of the murmuring deep the highest tribunal in the presidency holds its sittings, and keeps from thence a watchful eye over the decisions in the Courts below. If, as ill-luck would have it, the case catches the eye of a learned Judge, our poor friend might be called upon to show cause why the punishment inflicted on him should not be enhanced. Now, what cause can he show? Learned Judges are apt to be critical. To say that the fellow was impertinent might convince sympathetic laymen, but might fail to satisfy their Lordships. So the poor *Saheb* might get quite morbid over the matter. The suspense would be awful. His digestion might be ruined. He might have strange disquieting dreams. At last, when the decision comes, his worst fears might not perhaps be realised, but the shock to the nerves would not easily be got over.

Had things stood even thus, it would have been bad enough. But as if to add the last straw, a division bench the other day went perhaps a little out of its way to drop a hint, that if the complainant were severely handled, he might seek further redress in a Civil Court. Such a hint has not to be given twice. A poor irritable man might thus find that, what with damages, and

legal charges, and one thing or another, his expenses in rupees, managed to get into four figures. Now if one is to be mulcted so heavily for the indiscretion of a moment, one might well be excused for expressing an emphatic fear, that at no distant date the whole Empire will be going to—well—to the interesting quadrupeds of the canine species.

## XI.

## THE PEDAGOGUE.

IN these days of colleges and schools, who cares for the poor pedagogue, with his mediocre knowledge of the vernacular, and doubtful smattering of English? Yet the majority of the little aspirants for learning pass through his hands before they are ripe for the study of the *Bilatee* tongue. Their knowledge of letters begins with the orthodox prayer to Ganesha, the god of wisdom, and "the remover of dangers and difficulties." The hand of the pedagogue guides the chubby little fingers through the curious contortions of that time-honoured tribute of faith. Then follows a salutation to the *Mahatmas*, and after this come the letters of the alphabet in due succession. So the pedagogue sits at the very cradle of learning, and croons his lullabies of vernacular lore into the unwilling ear of childhood. He guides the tottering steps of his little charges into the temple of the Muses.

A young rogue has been showing signs of early depravity. His guardians have caught him once and again in dangerous intimacy with marbles. He has taken to drilling unsightly holes in the floor with his tops. He has joined a miniature cricket club, and calls out *ti-eem*, and *ow-oot* with reprehensible zeal. Above everything, he is for ever shouting his little throat hoarse, and laying in a stock of rude health and animal spirits sufficient to disturb the peace and

quiet of any respectable native family. All this must be changed, or the poor hopeful might come to an untimely and undesirable end. So the astrologer is consulted, and an auspicious day and hour fixed for the momentous event. In due time a gay crowd of relatives and friends escort the little novice to the modest establishment, over which the pedagogue holds undisputed sway.

At the little academy all is bustle and gaiety. The pedagogue has laid aside his wand of office *pro tem*, and has put on his best *Pugree*. His scholars are dressed in holiday garments. Their faces are beaming with expectation, for the introduction of a new member in their midst is usually marked by the distribution of sweets and brand-new slates to them. At last the beat of drum, and *tom-tom* announces the approach of the gay procession. The little victim dressed in bright attire is led to the altar of learning. Then follow the customary salutations to the gods, and presents to the pedagogue, and the poor mannikin is condemned to unwilling bondage as an apprentice to the guild of letters. After a few months spent in diligent cultivation of the alphabet on a slate, a second gay ceremonial marks his elevation to the honour of using pen, ink, and paper. After this all is serene, and his pursuit of learning is thenceforth carried on in the plain business-like fashion of every-day life.

Within his own little domain the pedagogue is an autocrat. His voice is final on all questions touching the internal discipline of the establishment over which he rules—with a stout cane. From his judgment there is no appeal, and any sentence he feels it necessary

to pass is carried out summarily with his own sacred hands. His strictness as a disciplinarian is generally in inverse proportion to his stock of knowledge. The less he knows, the more he feels bound to make up for any slight shortcomings in that respect, by a little extra severity. He never forgets the sound advice of Solomon anent the usefulness of the rod. He considers that handy little instrument as a panacea for all the faults and failings of childhood. Insubordination, mischief, idleness, and a weakness for playing the truant, all resolve themselves in his mind into so many raps on the bare hand of the culprit administered with suitable vigour. He stimulates with it the lagging faculties of the dullard. He represses with it any extra zeal for enterprizes of a daring character in a reprobate.

There is no nonsense about the pedagogue. He has the utmost contempt for sentiment. That there is a way of managing his little charges other than by the frequent and unsparing use of the rod, never enters his imagination. He understands the art of teaching as handed down by tradition from time immemorial, and he will have nothing to do with new-fangled notions about kindness and gentle treatment. The path of learning is rugged and steep, and mildness would only soften the fibre of the pupil, and render him incapable of rapid progress. So he sticks to his own stern and mistaken notions. But to do him justice, he does this more from an imperative sense of duty than from any love of harshness for its own sake.

With matters standing thus, it is small wonder that the pedagogue is not popular with his pupils. He is

dreaded by almost all and liked by few, at least during the time they happen to be under his charge. Some daring spirits are ever in search of ways and means to defy his authority, and cause him personal discomfort. They put vermin in his *Pugree*, and prepare his chair with sharp-pointed pins and needles, which effect an entrance into his sacred person on his attempting to sit down, and cause him to rise hurriedly, and relieve his feelings by using strong language sadly out of keeping with the dignity of his office. For these delicate attentions the culprits, if found out, receive stern discipline at the rod's end, or if the offence cannot be brought home to anyone, the requirements of justice may be met by an impartial caning all round. But this damps the ardour of the young reprobates for a short while only, and a desire for revenge soon makes them as reprehensibly active as ever. Thus the warfare is carried on until the time comes to say good-bye, and master and pupil part company with few regrets on either side.

But when the giddy, mischievous lad has grown into a thoughtful young man, with wider sympathies and keener sensibilities, he begins to look back on his early school-days with different feelings. The smart of the cane has been forgotten, and a host of happy memories come crowding round that delightful period of life. A kindlier feeling arises in the mind towards the poor pedagogue, with perhaps a shade of regret at the trouble given to that long-suffering individual.

The sternness of the pedagogue also has perhaps by this time melted under the combined influence of age and poverty. He too has forgotten the pranks and



escapades of his quondam pupils, and takes a pardonable pride in their success in life. So when after the lapse of years, master and pupil meet, it is with cordial feelings of sympathy and good-will. The occupation of the pedagogue was never very remunerative, and in these days of competition he is fairly pushed by the young men from the 'varsity. Even Brahmin ingenuity and economy cannot always make the slender, precarious income suffice for the humble wants of his growing family. So if he appeals to his old pupils, they gladly avail themselves of this opportunity to disburden their conscience by the bestowal of a little timely help on the poor man, and when they have done this, they somehow feel all the better for it.

## XII.

## THE MITHAI-WALLA.

THE itinerant *Mithai-walla* is a popular tradesman. He is generally either a *Pardeshi*, or a man from Guzerat. The former hails from the distant North, from the sacred banks of the Ganges, or from Lahore and its neighbourhood. The latter comes from somewhere nearer, from the dominions of the Gaekwar, and the surrounding districts belonging to the English *Sirkar*. The former speaks the sweet language of Indian poetry and Indian song. The latter jabbbers the uncouth dialect of Indian commerce. Yet each has his select clientèle, and each is successful in his own humble way.

Boyhood is more keenly sensible of the needs of the body than of those of the mind. The youthful rogue who wades in the most perfunctory manner through his daily lessons, yet finds the task of sitting still and looking out through the window at the fun going on in the streets, an exhausting affair. Nature requires in early life frequent and plentiful nourishment, and the heart of boyhood turns naturally to sweets. The active digestion of youth enables these hungry little souls to dispose of an inordinate amount of the attractive stuff. At that delightful time of life the appetite rarely fails, and the demand for sweet things is only limited by the supply of pocket-money. All this is well known to the *Mithai-walla*, who, instead of wasting his time in

knocking about the streets in search of chance customers, finds it more conducive to satisfactory business, to select a coign of vantage in the neighbourhood of schools. There he takes his seat and awaits the arrival of his youthful patrons. Soon the welcome sound of the bell rings the hour of recess, and the merry crowd comes trooping through the open door, laughing, shouting, rejoicing at the little breath of freedom, which comes as a welcome relief from the uncongenial work of the school-room. A move is at once made in the direction of the *Mithai-walla*, and business goes on briskly.

The transactions are generally carried on on the principle of prompt payment in cash. Occasionally, however, a youthful financier, whose supply of pocket-money has run short, conceives the brilliant idea of obtaining the much-desired dainties in exchange for a promise to settle up at an early date in the future. The tradesman is generally not very obdurate, and the bargain is closed. But such dealings sooner or later end somewhat disastrously for the little customer. He becomes rather reckless in his purchases, and is naturally unable to meet his liabilities. The *Mithai-walla* is patient for a while, but by-and-by becomes importunate, and the crash comes when an appeal is made to the people at home for a settlement of the bill against the young hopeful; and that worthy is in disgrace.

All too soon the bell rings again, and with unwilling steps the youthful aspirants for knowledge enter the temple of learning. The store of the *Mithai-walla* has been considerably lightened, but yet much remains to be disposed of. So he raises up the basket to his head,

and goes away in search of "fresh fields and pastures new."

Near the large establishments in the business quarters of the city there is some chance for the *Mithai-walla*. So he waits patiently for the hour of tiffin, when one by one the hard-working clerks come out for such light refreshments as their humble means allow. They have had their morning *dāl-bhat*, ere they left for office, and as hours must elapse ere they sit down to supper, a little slice of *hālwa* and a *lota* full of water are welcome as a temporary offering to the inner man. But these people have generally only a limited amount of spare cash, and their custom is not much to boast of.

More valuable is the patronage of the active and enterprising, but at times somewhat corpulent people of Guzerat. These worthy people have often a great fondness for oleaginous sweets, and if the tradesman succeeds in hitting their taste, he may fairly be said to be in luck. If circumstances are thereafter only decently favourable to him in the matter of health and ability to work, he stands a fair chance of returning to his native village a much richer man than when he left it to seek his fortune in the great city.

The labours of the *Mithai-walla* may be prolonged through the dusky evenings into the early hours of night. Or it may happen that he is of nocturnal habits, and prefers the custom of the theatre-going public. In any case, he takes the precaution of sticking on to his *khomcha* of sweets a little tin-lamp, with a large cotton wick. The dim flickering flame of this primitive affair serves two important purposes: it gives just light

enough to enable him to weigh out the right kind of stuff, and to examine with sufficient accuracy the coins tendered in payment; it also serves to indicate to the casual customer, whose attention has been arrested by the loud voice of the hawker, the direction in which that individual happens to be.

The theatre-going public have a steady and willing servant in the *Mithai-walla*, who is ever ready to attend to their wants. Sitting up in the tropics, to witness even the best performance, is an exhausting work, and is apt to find the audience both in appetite and thirst. The close, warm atmosphere of the crowded house is also likely to prove oppressive. So from time to time, between the acts, the audience file out to breathe the cool, fresh air outside, and the *Mithai-walla* and the *Sola-water* and *Limlet-walla* secure a fair amount of patronage.

But it is on big holidays, like the Cocoanut Day, or the *Taboots*, or at the great fairs, that the *Mithai-walla* is to be seen in his glory. He has at a great sacrifice disposed of the stock of stale *hālwa* and *pendas* that has gone on accumulating on his hands for a week or so. He has laid in a fresh and ample collection of nice and tempting dainties, and thus armed, has sallied forth early in the day in search of custom. It is a time of bustle and activity with the poor fellow, for one successful and lucky day might bring in more than a whole week or two of the dull ordinary routine of daily toil. Holidays, which bring much-needed rest, and innocent enjoyment to the toiling masses, mean to the poor *Mithai-walla* much harder work than usual. But strange as it may seem, he actually looks forward to

them. The reason is not far to seek. To these industrious people, work is welcome enough if it brings in proportionate gains, and labour is sweet, if rewarded with the good things of life.

## XIII.

## THE BAYL (BULLOCK).

THE strong-minded individuals belonging to the fairer half of humanity, who are for ever standing up for the rights of their sex, and protesting loudly against the tyranny of man, may take heart of grace and point out with supreme satisfaction, that in India, of all countries in the world, in conservative India, the cow enjoys a position of far greater respect and consequence than the one who ought, in the natural course of things, to be considered her lord and master. The cow is the sacred animal *par excellence*, and any share of the sacred character which falls to the lot of the poor *Bayl* is only a reflected glory. The lines of the former fall generally in pleasant places, and she leads a life of ease and comfort. The latter is frequently condemned to perpetual hard labour, tempered with such mild stimulants to exertion as bamboo sticks, or leather thongs, or other pleasant trifles of that kind. Of course, I leave out of consideration the few well-fed bulls, whose sole end in life is to eat, and grow stout, and pay amatory attention to the fairer individuals of their species. Their lot is by no means to be pitied. I am talking only of the poor mutilated animal, whom the necessities of man have reduced to the condition of his very drudge and slave.

There is the oilman's *Bayl*, who has to go round and round the primitive mill, for more hours than one would

care to reckon up. The work is apt to make the poor animal a trifle giddy, so the eyes are covered with blinkers, and thus blindfolded, the patient creature earns its daily bread, and that of its master.

Then there is the *Bayl* who works the *moat*, a primitive contrivance to draw water from the wells. His lot is certainly a little better than that of his brother at the oil-mill. He breathes the pure fresh air of heaven, and though he has to keep a monotonous walk backwards and forwards, yet the companionship of a fellow-sufferer at his side, goes, perhaps, some way in relieving the tedium of compulsory labour.

Again we have the *Bayls* at the chunam-mill. Here, however, they are frequently relieved by their rougher and stouter cousins of the genus *Bubalus*. Quite a merry procession goes round and round the well-beaten track. First we have the poor animals pulling might and main, then follows the heavy stone-wheel, and behind this walk a couple of labourers, one manipulating iron rods, with which he turns the chunam, the other paying gentle attentions to the animals, whenever they show a tendency to relax their efforts.

Of the *Bayl's* poor country cousins, the ryot's lean cattle, the less said the better. Their master is not overburdened with the good things of this world, and his own chances of getting a full meal are extremely precarious. The wretched dependents cannot be expected to be better off. For four months of the year they revel in plenty, the moist earth sending up a rich harvest of luscious grass, toothsome and satisfying. How they manage to exist during the remaining months, they only know ; there is precious little to keep



them going. But though a few lay them down, never more to rise in this world, still many struggle on to the next fall with its brief spell of abundance and contentment.

Lastly, we have the rather diminutive, but comparatively happy pair of *Bayls*, who draw a *chhakdi* after them at a merry ambling pace. Their lives have fallen in pleasant places. Their master cares not how much they eat, so long as they manage to get up a sufficient speed to enable him to pass by the rival chariots the happy winner of the race. One is apt to form but a poor estimate of the running powers of the phlegmatic *Bayl*, but, when he is well-cared for and put on his mettle he attains quite a respectable trot. Of course I must not be supposed to suggest that he can rival his one-hoofed cousin from Arabia, but under favourable conditions, he certainly goes much faster than the regulation three miles an hour, at which the country carts usually proceed.

Now I do not mind confessing, that I have a sort of sneaking admiration for the poor over-worked *Bayl*. I cannot help noticing how philosophically he takes his hard life. However unpleasant his lot may be, he never complains. You will always see him placidly chewing his dinner, and reflecting, perhaps, on the pleasures of contentment. The present is hardly all that even an animal might desire. The future holds out no brilliant possibilities, that might make amends for past discomfort. Hope tells no flattering tale to the poor bullock, yet he quietly eats the few handfulls of grass thrown before him, and is grateful for even such small mercies. He is rarely disposed to be mutinous.

He combines not with his fellows for the luxury of a strike. Each day finds him patiently at his work, until the hour of deliverance comes, "life's fitful fever is over," and the poor *Bayl* is in the happy hunting grounds, for ever free from earthly cares and earthly troubles.

There are kind-hearted men who profess a love for dumb animals. As a tangible proof of this they throw handfuls of sugar to the colonies of ants on the *Maidan*. These warlike insects show their gratitude by paying unpleasant attentions to the lower extremities of passers by, causing them to execute a wild dance, accompanied with vigorous stamping of feet. Now if these good souls were to turn the stream of their charity to the poor though unromantic *Bayl*, if they were to try to shed a beam of happiness on his comparatively cheerless path, they would be doing a thing for which they need never feel any regret, and which might fairly be set down to their credit in "the great hereafter."

## XIV.

## THE ZEALOUS REFORMER.

HE is a curious product of the times. He represents the terrible struggle between ancient and modern thought. His mind soars heavenwards, away to the dreamland of liberty. His heart drags him down to the earth right into the quagmire of tyrannical custom. His mental being palpitates with the eager desire to pull up superstition root and branch. His womenkind pull his heart-strings, and he yields him tamely to their guiding hands. He pants for the freedom of the West. He is painfully conscious of the bondage of the East. Europe lures him on with a winning smile; Asia holds him back with a grip of iron. His convictions urge him forward on the troublous path of reform. The traditions of thirty centuries drag heavily on his footsteps.

Vigorous action is denied to the zealous reformer, but he can talk, he can write, and he can hold meetings. What words of wisdom flow from his lips! To hear him is to be convinced. To read his writings is to have a lesson in social morals. To attend one of his meetings is to find oneself in Utopia. But whither does all this tend? Towards what attainable goal is he striving? What signal success has he achieved in the past? What realisable ambition is there in the future? And echo mockingly answers, "What indeed!"

Reform in dress and external appearance is easy

enough, and there is plenty of it. The flowing robes and *dhoties* of the Oriental are being replaced by the close-cut garments of Europe. The loose slipper-like shoes of India, have given way to the latest importation in patent leather. A commendable portion of the locks is saved from the ruthless hands of the Tonsor. Perhaps in the near future the *Puggree* will be exchanged for the *Sola-Topee*. Western food and Western drink are winning their way to favour, in spite of the *Shasters*, and in spite of the shrieks of the orthodox. But of real useful reform there is precious little.

Yet there is a change, not brought about by the efforts of the reformer, but by the slow reaction of Western thought and Western education on the dogged conservatism of the East. This is not always an unmixed blessing, not always an unquestionable improvement. Yet the change is there, and it will go on spreading. True and beneficent reformers will be those, who have the will as well as the power to guide the stream through safe channels, to let it cut its way slowly but usefully through fertilizable soil, lest it waste itself on barren and unyielding rock.

But to do this, the reformer must be in touch with the people. His heart must beat in sympathy with theirs. He must feel for them, and with them. He must descend from the cold heights of abstract speculation and abstract argument. He must deal with the stern realities of life. It is thus alone that his voice will carry weight, thus alone that he can win the confidence of those he would like to lead. Above everything, he must not strive too eagerly for the approval of the *Sahib*. He must not fear the thunders

of his press, he should not long inordinately for its patronizing pat. On the broad sympathies, common to all humanity, the voice of the *Sahib* is that of a cultured gentleman. On the narrower questions of Indian social reform his opinions are those of a somewhat unsympathetic outsider. In the wide field of morality his speculations are entitled to respect. But if he ventures to judge of the customs of other people by his own, and approves or disapproves of them according as they come near to, or deviate from, those of his own country, it would be but the narrowness of insular pride.

Then again the zealous reformer should cultivate a little of that useful quality called moral courage. When he ventures to point out the way, he must be prepared to take it himself. It is but tame work to hold forth eloquently against social evils, but when the time comes for action to hang back on some frivolous or transparent pretext. It is no doubt unsafe to hurry a people along the troublous road of reform. It is well to ponder long and anxiously, whether the times are ripe for the change, but when once satisfied of the justice and practicability of his cause, the reformer must stand firmly by his guns, or else he finds himself in a sadly undignified position. The orthodox greet his fall with a triumphant warwhoop. His erstwhile friends—native and foreign—look on with cold disapproval. The zealous reformer gains really very little in the end. I believe he means well. But as matters stand, the cause of reform suffers rather than gains by his advocacy.

## XV.

## THE LETTER-WRITER.

THE Post Office is a wonderful institution. In the good old times, whatever else might have been better, sending a letter to anxious friends at a distance was a much more serious matter than it is in these days of railways, and steam-ships, and Post Office vans. Travelling to any distance was rarely without a spice of danger, so to send a special courier meant great and unreasonable expense. To wait for some chance friend to turn up, who might be bound in the desired direction, involved painful uncertainty. So that the modern system, under which the good *Sirkar* kindly undertakes to carry letters far and near, with reasonable diligence, for the trifling consideration of half an anna, is a boon that is appreciated by the most illiterate *ryot*. To the fortunate few, who are on terms of familiarity with the three R's, no further help is necessary. Given pen and ink, and they can pour their soul on paper, and their willing servant the Post Office is ready to take their effusions to the world's end if required.

But there is a much more numerous class, who though equally anxious to hold communion with absent friends, yet lack the necessary skill in penmanship. It is to such people that that interesting functionary the letter-writer proves really useful. Of course it may happen that a man writes out the whole letter himself

in his mother-tongue, but when he comes to put down the address, his confidence in his own powers fails him. He has a lurking suspicion that with the address written in one of the Indian vernaculars the missive may fail to reach its destination. Anyhow, he believes that if the superscription on the cover were found to be in the *Sirkar's* own language, somehow or other the letter would receive more respectful attention. So he appeals to the letter-writer for help, and that individual is but too anxious to oblige for the trifling consideration of a copper or two. But these are not the most valuable patrons of the poor man, though in these days of hard competition their custom is by no means unwelcome.

Fancy conjures up a picture of the Eastern letter-writer with loose robes and a flowing beard. Of course, he moves in an atmosphere of poetry and romance. He is old now, but has had his adventures with the blind-god in the heyday of his youth. The snows of life's winter have long since healed the wounds, but he retains a sufficient recollection of them to take a sympathetic interest in the troubles of his youthful customers. He uses the flowery language of Eastern verse. The delightful, if somewhat hyperbolic, expressions of Eastern courtesy are at his finger's end, His memory is good, and his own composition is embellished with many an apt quotation culled from the treasures of Eastern song. Such was, perhaps, the Oriental letter-writer in the good old days gone by, and such he may still be in the Hindustani-speaking North. But in the unromantic South, in the Deccan and the Konkan, a more matter-of-fact and ordinary-

looking individual than the letter-writer it would be hard to find. He is generally a Hindoo. He is dressed in short, close-fitting, business-like garments. He selects a coign of vantage in the near neighbourhood of the Post Office, as the point towards which customers might naturally be expected to gravitate. His requirements in the way of office-room are not very great. A space of about one yard square suffices to accommodate himself, his belongings, and a stray customer or two. He generally manages to secure this, free of rent on an open veranda, if not, during the fair season at least, the friendly shade of a tree serves equally well, and costs nothing.

There is no nonsense about the letter-writer. Hard work and scanty earnings have driven all the poetry out of his head. A blushing fair one wishing to open her heart to an absent swain, whom she loves "not wisely but too well," is to the scribe only a customer good for so many coppers, and nothing more. He listens to her pitiful tale with a stolid look. Translates the broken sentences into curt matter-of-fact phrases, seals the missive, puts down the address, fixes the stamp, and posts the whole affair. There his labour ends, his interest ceases. He receives the customary honorarium with some satisfaction, and the next moment has dismissed the whole matter from his mind, and is ready to attend to a fresh applicant.

The next customer is a chatty old soul. She has a son somewhere it appears, who is the pride of her heart. She takes a delight in sending him long epistles, containing her blessings, and good-wishes, and



the latest gossip about friends, in whom he is supposed to take interest. To these loving communications she receives the briefest imaginable replies, which, moreover, like the visits of the angels, are few and far between. But they satisfy the fond, foolish soul, and reams of paper could not contain all she has got to say in return. But time is precious, the postal regulations inflexible, and the poor letter-writer has yet his day's work before him. So he cuts her short in the midst of her raptures, and closes the letter as an unmistakable hint that the rest must stand over for the next convenient opportunity.

Anon comes one, who has unpleasant news to communicate, and feels a great deal of delicacy about it. Some one is lying ill unto death, and the little paper-messenger is to summon the dear ones to the bed of the poor sufferer. The unwelcome news must be communicated, but he wishes it to be broken as gently as could be. The letter-writer has no time to waste on sentiment, and in a few swiftly written sentences has done the needful.

The next case is of a more pleasant character. A young man has been successful in life. Fortune has begun to smile upon him, and in his hour of rejoicing he remembers the poor folks at home. He is anxious to send them a substantial token of his love in the shape of a little present of coin of the realm, through the friendly medium of the Post Office. The delicate attention is more welcome, and useful, than ever so long an effusion on paper could possibly be.

So the business of the letter-writer goes on, and if fortune is favourable to the poor man, he goes home

to his family with a light heart, and a purse well-filled with coppers. But things are not always prosperous. There is many a day when, with eager and anxious eyes, he waits for customers, who make no haste to appear, and after a wearisome and unprofitable watch, he goes home with a heavy heart, and pockets as light as when he left it in the morning.

The business of the letter-writer is of a delicate and confidential nature, and though his patrons are men in a humble rank of life, it is, perhaps, as well that he is usually of an unspeculative and unemotional turn of mind. In the course of his labours he becomes the recipient of more secrets than a father-confessor. Then again from the very necessities of the case, his patrons have to open their mind more truly to him, than some of them would feel inclined to do at the confessional. It is, therefore, perhaps, just as well, that the *confidante* is not a man of active imagination or quick perceptions. His memory is conveniently dull, and he gets on in a most satisfactory way with his customers—and that is, perhaps, as much as he ever cares to aspire to.

## XVI.

## THE DAMIS-LOGUES.

THE zealous servants of the public, who have to maintain peace and order, have of necessity a number of difficult duties to perform. The prevention and detection of crime claims naturally their chief attention, and as an auxiliary to this, they have to undertake the delicate task of keeping a watchful eye over the doings of the great fraternity of never-do-wells, known by the significant title of *Damis-logues*. Now I am no philologist, but I cannot help being struck by the curious alteration which takes place in a word before it passes from one language into another. The adoptive parent generally insists on a considerable change before it will accept the new bantling as its own. Sometimes the little innocent is so altered that its own natural parent can hardly recognize it again. The strange word "Damis" is only the familiar "damaged" under Asiatic disguise. *Damis-logues* means only damaged people — people whose character has been wrecked on the numerous shoals and rocks of life.

A man has been an erring member of society, and his sin has found him out. He is, of course, hauled up before one of those learned gentlemen, who look into these matters through the luminous medium of the criminal codes. The poor wretch is duly convicted, and ordered to submit to close retirement for a year or two at the public expense. This may be accompanied

by a little compulsory exercise to promote sound digestion. A residence is kindly provided for him in one of those delightful establishments, which serve as temporary asylums for people in a delicate condition of moral health. As soon as the sentence is passed, the bewildered wretch is marched up to a closed conveyance, and given a free ride to the place which is to become his home for some time to come.

His entry into the comfortable establishment, known as the House of Correction, marks a red-letter day in his history, for he has established his right to be considered thenceforth as a worthy member of the great fraternity of *Damis-logues*. After his elevation to this distinguished honor, an early opportunity is taken to obtain a faithful likeness of the man, to help in his subsequent identification, should that become necessary. With his experiences within the walls of the prison we have nothing to do. They cannot be over-pleasant, as is shown by the frequently large mortality. But of course he must not be too particular, and must expect to have to rough it a little, and has no right to complain if he finds the discipline a trifle harder than he imagined it would be.

The policeman has a keen eye for the *Damis*. He can take him in at a glance. He can single him out of a crowd. He is ever on the prowl for his legitimate prey near the shops, where the latter is likely to come to dispose of his ill-gotten spoils. Often when the scamp hopes to convert dangerous goods, which might lead to detection, into safe coin of the realm his manœuvres are frustrated. Just as he is about to effect he much-desired exchange, the policeman's hand is

laid on the rascal's shoulder, and once more there is the familiar little comedy, which ends in the wretch being again handed over to the care of the worthy official, who presides over the hospitalities of Her Majesty's House of Correction.

A *Pucka-Damis*, one who has graduated with honours in his profession, keeps a bright look-out for his inveterate enemies, the myrmidons of law. The policeman in uniform has hardly a chance with him. His sharper brother with the *suffet cupra* might succeed better at first, but his presence becomes soon as familiar to the *Damis-logues* as if they had known him all their lives. The officer is as easily recognised as if he had on the Queen's uniform. It is ever a struggle between the *Damis-logues* and the officers of law. Often the rogues escape. Sometimes they are caught, and then there is a temporary secession of hostilities, until they are once more free to begin their nefarious practices, and then the campaign opens again.

Now, so far as the out-and-out *Damis*, the veteran of a dozen convictions, is concerned, the stern mode of dealing with him adopted by the laws of civilized countries is, perhaps, a necessity. There is small chance of reclaiming him. His hand is ever raised against society, and society is, perhaps, justified in hunting him down, and confining him safely where he can do no harm. But such a course is not always the best, nor the most merciful, especially in dealing with the novice in crime. His case has not yet become hopeless, kindness and good example might yet win him from the devious paths of crime. It is here that preventive punishment—punishment that crushes the individual—that others

may take warning, is to be deprecated. There is, of course, much to be said for retributive justice. The offender has sinned against society, and society is justified in putting down its foot on his throat. He has defied the laws, and he must take the consequences. The common weal requires that he should suffer, and what is the ruin of a single individual where the good of the community is at stake?

All this is very well, but there is a soft voice within us that ought to plead for the poor wretch. Of course, if the evil within him has driven away all the good, and he persistently declines to mend his crooked ways, even mercy can do nothing with him. But if there yet remains a spark of good which, by a little gentle and clever management, may be made to triumph over his worse self, is it not worth trying to reclaim him? Man is at best but a poor erring creature. Is he then justified in stamping his brother-man with the indelible brand of disgrace, and saying to him, "Begone thou unclean wretch, and herd not with thy betters"?

And how terrible the punishment to a mind, that has not yet lost its sense of shame, that has not yet become perfectly callous and indifferent! One would think that the punishment of the guilty wretch has ended, when he leaves the prison walls; but alas! it has but begun. Every good man's door is closed against him. He lies under the ban of social ostracism. Wherever he goes suspicious glances are cast upon him. The finger of scorn is pointed at him, for he is a *Damis*, and what have respectable people to do with him? If he seeks for honest work, there is a wise shaking of heads, and he is asked to begone. And yet

after all he is a man. He carries within him that wonderful something we call a human soul. The precious possibility of living down his sin and shame, of fighting the powers of evil within him, and of rising triumphant, is not hopelessly gone. Yet how terrible the struggle before him. If in the past, when society yet held him within its pale, he tripped, what chance is now left to the poor wretch to make a bold stand? It is here that our boasted civilization has done very little. We have indeed codes which nicely measure out the exact punishment for all imaginable offences. There are a host of establishments where the degraded victims of preventive justice are housed and fed at the public expense. But is there one where an earnest attempt is made to win the adult criminal back to the narrow but straight path of duty and respectability? And yet we are proud of this wonderful Nineteenth Century of ours. We talk glibly of mercy and charity, and of our immortal souls, but when it comes to practical proof, we find ourselves hardly much ahead of the enlightened times, when it was held that nothing short of the gallows could expiate for coaxing a horse from the custody of his lawful owner.

## XVII.

THE MAHAR "*ET HOC GENUS OMNE.*"

THE poor low-caste Hindoo had hardly a very enjoyable time of it in the past. Every one looked down upon him. The twice-born Aryan regarded his very shadow as communicating untold pollution, which could be washed out of from his person and clothes only by careful and conscientious ablution. The public offices were naturally closed against him. Even the doors of courts of justice scarce offered him an entrance. The very temples of the gods would be desecrated by his unclean presence. He was, of course, a human being. But the idea that he was a brother was scouted out as rank heresy. To be sure, his right to an immortal soul was conceded. It was something he would share with brute and worm, and it was therefore hardly worth while disputing it; but it conferred no privileges. Morally he might by chance be far from despicable. He might boldly speak the truth, where some might be tempted to prevaricate. His sturdy honesty might refuse to appropriate aught save what was justly his due. The love of his dusky helpmeet might suffice for his lowly heart. Yet he was only an out-caste wretch, and his touch was pollution.

On the very outskirts of the city, town, or village, at a safe distance from the homes of his Aryan neighbours, a space was set apart for him and his tribe. There he built his lowly hut, and lived with his humble



family. A being so neglected and despised relapsed but too frequently into a state of original sin, as evidenced by the collection of visible impurities on his person and clothes. He evidently did not bear in mind the excellent maxim which places cleanliness next to the possession of an angelic disposition. Shut off from all lucrative trades and professions, the chance of earning wealth was necessarily an extremely small one, and the unfortunate man added poverty to his other sins and disabilities.

No one went into his quarters from choice. The impressions left on the senses by a visit to them were none of the pleasantest. Wherever the eye rested was dirt, squalor, and filth. Naked children wallowed in the mud. Attenuated *Moorghis* pecked at visionary grains on the ground. Lean curs in a chronic state of semi-starvation yelped a languid challenge to the intruder, keeping up at the same time a steady retreat proportioned to the advance of the stranger. Inside most of the huts everything betokened want and misery. Man and beast languished under the baneful shade of isolation and social bann.

As a set off against all this, the poor low-caste had privileges and perquisites. He had a monopoly of the somewhat unattractive but withal necessary operations to which his more fortunate Aryan brethren would not stoop. Street sweeping was in the hand of one sect, other sanitary arrangements connected with the removal of impurities in those of another, and a third had the manufacture of leather all to itself. Moreover the right of some of them to the skin and unsavoury remains of deceased animals was

hallowed by time-honoured custom. The lordly Aryan was kind and liberal in his own way, even to the out-cast.

There is an excellent proverb, which allows to every barking quadruped (however humble) a time of prosperity. During the eclipses of the sun and the moon, the low-caste Hindoo had a specially good time of it. The teaching of modern astronomy was, of course, either unknown, or regarded as all humbug. The true facts as even a child might tell were, that two low-caste giants, *Rahu* and *Ketu*, swallowed up bodily either of the two unfortunate luminaries, and could only be induced to restore them by large and prompt offerings to their descendants on the earth. So the *Mahars* and *Mangs* and others of that ilk rejoiced, and yelled out the hoarse challenge *De dan sute Giran* (down with your cash, and the eclipse would be over). The holy Brahmin trembled for his gods, and threw a copper to these sons of the evil ones, so as to propitiate their mighty ancestors.

Such was the low-caste in the days gone by, and such he continues to be with a few modifications. But a spirit of kindness has breathed over his fortunes. The British *Sirkar* is no respecter of persons. In the ranks of the army, the redoubtable privates *Ramnak* and *Gunmheter* stand shoulder to shoulder with their high-caste *confrères*. They may rise to be *Subedars*, and be entitled to shake hands with the *Burra Officer Sahibs*, and sit down on a chair in their august presence. The humble origin of these sons of Mars is never remembered against them, and they owe their advancement to their own honesty and stoutness of heart.

Then, too, the Ministers of the Gospel are on the lookout for him, ready to bring him to the fort in all brotherly love and charity. The high-caste Hindoo turns from the *Padre* with fear and trembling. To accept his teaching would mean loss of caste and kindred. He would be irrevocably parted from those nearest and dearest to him. Moreover, he is well enough as he is, and has no wish for novelty and change. With the low-caste Hindoo the case is somewhat different. He has much to gain, and hardly anything to lose. The holy water sprinkled on his brow removes all impurities and disabilities. He becomes thenceforward a *Sahib*. He has, of course, no claim to all the rights and privileges of a *Burra Sahib* from the *Bilatee* country. His detractors may call him a country *Sahib* in contradistinction to the *Goratalogues*, but that is mere jealousy. He dons the costume of Europe. People do not hesitate to shake hands with him. His children may be educated with the best in the land. They may rise to the highest offices in the State. Indeed, a more beneficent transformation can hardly be imagined. The only wonder is that so few avail themselves of the open sesame to advancement and prosperity.

Alas for this sinful age of *Kali* the lower classes seem destined to rise slowly but steadily in knowledge and power. The fickle goddess *Lakhmi* might begin to smile upon them, and as an inevitable consequence they would advance in wordly rank. On the other hand, hard times are coming to the pious and the learned. The study of the holy word brings no adequate return in the necessities of life. *Nyaya* and *Vyakarna* fail to keep the

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pot boiling. Even *Bilatec* learning is beginning to disappoint its ardent votaries. Who can say that perhaps in the distant future the out-caste of the past might not evolve himself out of his numerous disabilities, and leave his erstwhile more fortunate rivals far behind in the dubious race of life.

## XVIII.

## THE MEDICOES OF THE STREET.

THERE goes the *street-woid*. He has not a very prepossessing look. He does not belong to the Aryan type of humanity. He is a lineal descendant of the aboriginal inhabitant of Hindostan. Now it goes without saying that he can lay no claim to book-learning. He is innocent of all knowledge of the *Bilatee* language. The field of Eastern lore is to him a *terra incognita*. Yet is he in many respects a great medicine man, because he deals only in specifics. Having a mind above the paltry vanities of this world, he is somewhat scantily clad. The few clothes on his person are not very scrupulously clean, but that is a mere detail. He carries his dispensary about with him. The little *zoli*, which he swings over his shoulder, contains his precious medicaments. In it is to be found a cure for every ill the flesh is heir to. From tooth-ache to palsy, there is nothing which the leech does not feel equal to tackling.

He is not overburdened with modesty either. Why should he be? What avails modesty in this wicked world? If a man will not sing his own praises, who else will take the trouble to do it for him? Advertizing is as necessary to the *street-woid* as it is to the vendor of patent medicines, only in the case of the former the newspapers are of course out of the question. So he trusts to his own powerful lungs, and in a loud and

penetrating voice, invites all and sundry to avail themselves of his unrivalled skill. Has any one got the falling sickness? Here is the best chance in the world for him. Has he the colic or the ague? He cannot do better than try the *woid's* specifics. Is he too fat or too thin? The leech can set matters right in either case.

In these days of free hospitals, and medical colleges, the *street-woid's* occupation is almost gone. Even poor illiterate people do not care to trust themselves to his tender mercies. So he earns a precarious livelihood by trading in a few drugs, the properties and virtues of which are well known. Even here it is his labour as a collector that is taxed, and not his skill as a man of medicine. The customer wants a drug, which he names, and for a modest consideration the *woid* supplies him with it. A few coppers would, perhaps, suffice to buy up half the stock-in-trade of the poor man. He is, moreover, most accommodating. If the purchaser is not inclined to part with cash, a few handfuls of rice suffice to effect the bargain.

In these hard times, the poor *street-woid* is often reduced to strange shifts. When trade is dull, and the demands of nature urgent, he is not always above the weakness of asking for and accepting a little charity from the generous householder. In the course of evolution and the inevitable struggle for existence, the weakest must go to the wall, and it is within the limits of probability that the poor untrained follower of *Æsculapius* may be improved off the face of the earth, and when that by no means distant event comes to pass, it is to be feared that few will miss him or even care to remember him.

Then there is the *Churan-walla*. He is generally a *Pardesi* from the north. A cooly walks before him balancing a pole on his shoulder. From either extremity of this hangs a tray with compartments. These contain the leeches' medicines. Side by side with the worthy doctor walks a precocious lad hardly yet in his teens. A halt is made, and in a loud voice the *Churan-walla* sings the praises of his drugs in Hindostani doggerels. The urchin at his side replies in verse, which is far from complimentary to the medicos or to his nauseous preparations. Thus the interesting dialogue goes on. The doctor and his critic take their innings by turns, and the attack and defence are carried on with commendable energy. A crowd collects and looks on amused. A few are tempted to invest their coppers, and *Churan-walla* and urchin pass on to "fresh fields and pastures new."

Then we have a curious product of modern enterprize—the hawker of patent medicines. He carries a well-filled glass show-case on his head. In his hand he holds a bell, which he rings vigorously at intervals. He is more a tradesman than a man of medicine, though he may be ready if required to hold forth eloquently on the virtues and properties of the preparations, and to add his own testimony in support of their wonderful efficacy. His wares are mostly importations from Europe and America, but the products of local manufacture are occasionally seen. In the struggle for existence, this last species seems to be likely to supplant the other two, and in the course of a few decades, the *woid* and the *Churan-walla* will be mere memories of the past.

Though she can lay no claim to medical skill, I cannot resist the temptation of adding to this interesting list the woman who supplies the ugly but useful insect which is ever thirsting for human blood. A small dirty bag contains her stock-in-trade. A customer approaches and makes the usual inquiry. For answer she opens the bag filled with clay. Imbedded in this, twisting their bodies into horrible contortions, are the green insects the man is in search of. After a lively argument, the bargain is struck, but the purchaser is still suspicious. He will not have the insects without trial. He must satisfy himself that they are fresh and active, and ready to perform their useful function. The vendor waxes indignant. She protests that she would never condescend to cheat her patrons, and asks the sceptic to test for himself the excellence of her pets, an offer which is hastily declined with a slight shudder. Then rather than lose a good customer, the poor woman presents her own finger to the greedy insects, those that stick readily to it are chosen, and the bargain closed.

Lastly we may include the street-tonsor. In the dim past his ancestors were looked up to as surgeons in a rough sort of way. But the worthy descendant is not required to exhibit his surgical skill, save when he is asked to pare his customer's corns, or remove the superfluous hair from chin or occiput. A few old-fashioned people still exist who occasionally request him to draw a little blood from an inflamed part by the *Tumbdi*. This primitive instrument is only a suction tube. The barber makes slight incisions with a sharp steel blade, and then sucks through the *Tumbdi*,



taking care, of course, not to allow any of the fluid to get into his mouth.

The march of civilization is driving all these poor people out of this world, and though, on the whole, it might be for the advantage of mankind, one cannot help regretting that a number of odd and curious characters will disappear, and leave no trace behind.

## XIX. THE BAIRAGEE.

WHEN our pious friend first opened his eyes upon this world, it was beneath the leafy canopy of a hoary banyan tree. This gigantic specimen of the vegetable world had stood for ages by a Hindoo temple, sheltering man and beast and the gods beneath its grateful shade. An odour of sanctity pervaded the scene. A holy rivulet flowed murmuring by, singing a soothing lullaby to the new-born babe. Overhead the sacred tree spread its wonderful network of leaf and branch. The cool breeze, purified by long travel over holy ground, brought fresh life and vigour to wearied humanity. From the neighbouring shrine the gods looked benignly on the advent of one more faithful devotee in this sinful world. Under such favoring auspices the sanctimonious father smiled a welcome to his son, the heir to all his worldly possessions consisting of a few well-worn clothes dyed with ochre, a couple of hollow gourds, a frying pan, and a little shallow brass pot, which served the double purpose of a cooking-dish, and dinner plate.

The holy family were bound on a pilgrimage to the sacred banks of the Ganges. The advent of the little stranger made scarcely any alterations in their plans. After resting a few days the journey northwards was resumed, the tiny mannikin travelling for the most part in a little hammock slung across the shoulders of his

mother, being occasionally removed thence, after urgent and oft-repeated representations, to draw nourishment at her breast. It was in the holy temples of the north that the little fellow grew up into a sturdy lad, and received the elements of his education, such as it was to be. His learned parent had to spend his mornings and evenings in the necessary peregrinations in search of the wherewithal to satisfy the modest wants of his family. But after a refreshing mid-day nap, he would call the little hopeful to his side, and try to initiate him into the mysteries of alphabet and grammar. The young scamp, however, preferred, with the usual perverseness of boyhood, to consort with the urchins in the streets, and after hours spent in intimate communion with the dust, looking the very incarnation of mischief, to rush into a neighbouring stream, and swim about like a duck in its cool waters. His doting parents could deny him nothing, so he spent a happy boyhood with never a shade crossing his path.

But to most of us comes a time of tribulation and trial, and it came early enough to the poor lad. A pestilence carried away both his parents, leaving him a friendless orphan to the tender mercies of the world. The little fellow was quite overwhelmed with his loss, but a neighbouring *Bawa* took compassion on him, and allowed him to enlist as one of his numerous retinue of *chelas*. The lad was thus secure from want, but life was not as pleasant as it had been. The *Bawa* was a holy man. He mortified his flesh by exposure to sun and rain. All the world stood gazing at him with admiration, as he mumbled his prayers in blissful unconsciousness of what was going on around him.

The disciples of such a man had to make a decent show of piety before the faithful. Moreover, having the honor of belonging to the retinue of a great sage, they had to get up a reasonable amount of zeal in attending to his personal wants and comforts. Perhaps in the privacy of his hut the temper of the *Bawa* was not quite what it ought to have been. But we are getting too curious.

Then again, with such a goodly array of followers the commissariat stood in constant need of replenishing. This had to be done with the offerings of the faithful, a precarious business at the best. The peregrinations were therefore necessarily long and weary, but the training acquired in the art and science of successful mendicancy was invaluable. A few years of this salutary discipline saw our friend developed into a full grown *Bairagee*, with a tawny braid of hair, a lithe muscular frame, and a glib tongue. He had become fully conversant with the ways and means of successfully tapping the pockets of the faithful. One thing was wanting to complete his happiness—and that was the enjoyment of freedom. Even here chance favored him. The poor *Bawa*, worn out no doubt by his penances, died in a fit of apoplexy, and our young friend was at liberty to go whithersoever he pleased.

The youthful *Bairagee* made immediate preparations for travel. His commissariat arrangements were extremely simple. A hollow gourd to drink out of, and a small brass dish sufficed for his purposes, for at the end of each day's journey were there not the faithful to minister to his modest wants? The sole companion of his solitude was an agile and mischievous little son of Hanuman; who, whilst his master travelled, would perch on his

shoulder, and from that coign of vantage grin and chatter his approval of the things he saw around him. At the end of the journey he was ready to assist his master in begging his bread of the pious Hindoos. The scenes, through which the holy traveller passed, were often of picturesque beauty, but he was guiltless of any sentiment, and the only thing that affected him was the cool morning air, which always succeeded in giving a keen edge to his appetite.

I saw him in Chakmakpore the other day, looking the very picture of health and contentment. He will travel about in the enjoyment of single bliss, until he meets a young woman after his liking, and is joined to her for better or worse. He will then continue to quarter himself and his growing family on the faithful, and at last when his term of life is over, end his happy days with a peaceful death. Looking at him one is led to wonder how, in a country where myriads of this stamp live in ease and comfort, the poor cultivator can hardly eke out a wretched pittance by severe and unremitting toil, and by what mysterious and subtle laws of economy the drones thrive and fatten, whilst the bees are starving.

## XX.

## THE STREET SINGER.

HE is an old wrinkled man. Some seventy winters have laid their snows on his thin locks. Age and disease have quenched the light altogether in one eye. The other just enables him to find his way about in the city without a canine attendant. In one hand he carries a small old-fashioned instrument, whose rusty strings creak querulously as his thin fingers pass slowly over them. A small glass lamp, with a dim flickering flame, struggling ineffectually with the surrounding gloom, completes his equipment. Poor man, life has lost for him the few charms it ever had, yet the hopeless, weary battle must be fought to the bitter end.

A few giddy, light-hearted youths are enjoying the cool air on the *Maidan*. Ever and anon their superabundant mirth relieves itself in peals of laughter. The poor street singer halts, waits eagerly for some sign of encouragement, begins to move slowly away, looks back, hesitates, and halts again. No one seems to notice him in the least. His struggle is pitiful to see. Instinctively he feels that he is far from welcome. He makes as if he would take himself off. But stern necessity knows no law. There is no time to lose in idle hesitation. So he draws his bony fingers feebly across the almost tuneless wires, and his weak tremulous voice breaks forth into an old-time ditty, as unfashionable as his poor stiff limbs and wrinkled skin,

There are hasty exclamations of surprise, a word or two expressive of resentment, a peremptory order to begone, and then a kind soul or two quietly drop a few coppers into the old man's palm, and he resumes his weary peregrinations.

Yet time was when his step was firm and elastic, his heart light with the hopefulness of youth. Time was, when his voice was fresh and joyous, when his quaint melodies had eager listeners, whose eyes lighted with pleasure as he rendered them with the skill of one born to the craft. But that was in the good old days long ago. Repulse and disappointment have become quite familiar to him now by constant repetition. The old fire has almost died out, but even now a few embers remain, which on rare occasions burst forth into a transient flame. The old man's dim eye lights up with a strange gleam, his wrinkled face glows with the enthusiasm of an artistic nature, and for a few brief moments he forgets want and misery, and the dull cares of life, and moves and lives in a new world of his own. But all too soon the short spell of rapture is over, he awakens to the stern realities of life, and resumes once more the burden of poverty and its attendant humiliations and suffering.

Life's battle is for the swift and strong. Age and weakness have no chance against youth and energy. But in the eager admiration for the victors, who cares for the vanquished? All eyes are turned to the few who win. They are coddled and flattered, until they begin to fancy themselves a superior race of beings altogether. But who has even a thought to spare for the poor unfortunate ones, whose burden is almost

insupportable, and who, weary and foot-sore, are longing to go down to their eternal rest, but yet may not yield to the creeping langour that is paralyzing their limbs.

Nature's ways are inscrutable. After slowly sapping a man's strength, after steadily eating into his vitals, after forcing him unmercifully on the downward path to decay and corruption, after showing him in a thousand and one ways with cruel frankness, that he is wanted no more in this world, why does she not get rid of him forthwith? Why does she leave him a wreck, of no use to himself, and of less than no use to others? When she has tortured a poor victim with unrelenting harshness, why does she hesitate to let the lethe of oblivion fall on his soul? Poor, weak, erring, but withal long-suffering humanity can give no answer to this.

The unhappy street singer moves on. He resumes the weary round of appeals at places, where there is any chance of help, until he is ready to drop down with fatigue. Then he turns his steps homewards. His approach to the tumble-down cottage rouses the inmates, and a querulous voice enquires in harsh tones whether he has brought anything for supper. The old man returns no answer. The door is suddenly thrown open, and a sharp-featured woman totters out, and shrieks the same query once more. The poor street singer hangs down his head, and silently holds out the few coppers he has earned. The woman snatches these from his hands with indecent haste, and, with a gesture of infinite contempt, turns away from her unfortunate husband. The unhappy man hesitates



for some time, and then follows his unsympathetic partner into the house.

Inside the tumble-down hut, stretched at length on a comfortable mat are a pair of well-grown lads, who show unmistakable signs of being much better cared for than the poor old singer. These are his sons, who, too indolent to work, and too proud to beg, are content to let their poor aged parent earn both his own bread and theirs. Their doting mother loves them too well to speak even a single harsh word to them, and makes up for any mildness in this direction by taking it out of her poor lord and master. This selfish trio of mother and sons seems to have a pretty good time of it. They manage to thrive, while the poor singer slaves and starves. And yet the unfortunate man cannot see that anything is amiss. He thinks it is so natural that he should work, whilst they have nothing to do but to make themselves as comfortable as possible. Ask him to turn his good-for-nothing sons out bag and baggage, to work or starve, and he will turn on you a look of blank astonishment. He loves them too fondly for that. It would of course be well if they did work. But if they do not, can he allow them to come to misery and want? He would rather die than do that.

Poor old man! though his exterior is so rough and unattractive, he yet has a soft, a very soft and fond, foolish heart. He loves his children with a generous and self-sacrificing love. But, alas! in this wicked world such weakness carries its own inevitable punishment, whilst coarser and more self-assertive natures thrive amazingly. And after all, what is the reward of so much brave and patient labour and suffering? He

will barely be tolerated so long as he has strength enough to work. When his bodily powers fail entirely, he might, perhaps, be turned out into the street to shift for himself, and live or die even as it might chance to turn out.

Yet it would not be quite correct to say that no one cares for the poor old man even in his own house. There is some one who loves him with all the bright affection of her innocent little heart. A waif, an orphan, who had the slightest imaginable claim upon his slender resources, and whom he took in out of pity for her forlorn condition, worships him with the warm gratitude of an impulsive nature. At the sight of the poor bent figure the ready tears start to her eyes, and she tries to hide them by bustling about the old man under the pretence of taking off his tattered garments. Anon she hastily wipes away her tears, and looks at him with a bright smile. Talk of an angel (I really must beg pardon. I do not know of an angel, at least a good angel, in black. I believe all the celestial virtues are fitly enveloped in a fair skin. But perhaps here and there, just by mistake, a pure soul may have a sable environment) the little girl is surely one. She brings a little warm food for the poor man, takes him to his humble bed, smooths his pillow, and leaves him to the comfortable enjoyment of a sound, refreshing sleep after his tiring labours. Next morning he is up again with the lark and at his daily toil.

A splendid equipage is moving at a dashing pace along the road. The poor street singer is trudging patiently with the tottering gait of age and infirmity. Suddenly he hears a shout behind him, and the

rumbling of wheels. He takes a quick step forward, stumbles, and falls. There is a low plaintive cry, a tremulous twitching of the lips, a slight struggle, and all is over, the weary soul has passed away from this vale of tears to the happy regions beyond. Death is kinder to him than life. For life brought him only trouble and sorrow, labour and disappointment, whilst the dark angel brings in peace and eternal rest.

And what of those whom he loved so well, of whom he thought even in the last agony? I am sure I do not know, perhaps they have turned over a new leaf and have begun to lead a better and worthier life. For their own good here and hereafter, let us charitably hope so.

## XXI.

THE CROW (*in the Tragic Mood*).

A NOISY visitor entered my room this morning, I need not say unasked and unannounced. Now I am generally the most peaceable of mortals, but I hate to have my slumbers disturbed. The unfortunate *Nowker*, whose duty it is to call me early in the morning, approaches my bed with fear and trembling. He usually looks round to see that the coast is clear for a hurried retreat, if I am disposed to be violent. If his vocal efforts to rouse me are unavailing, he generally gives me a gentle shake, and bolts, with sundry articles of bed furniture in hot pursuit. But this visitor seemed to take things more coolly. Moreover, though he was energetic in his representations, and made a fearful noise, I could not make head or tail out of what he said. I must confess that my linguistic attainments are rather limited, but this is more my misfortune than my fault. Anyhow I was not going to stand much more of an harangue, in which the only words I could distinguish, were *caw-caw* repeated with annoying persistence. In language more forcible than politic, I strongly advised my visitor "not to stand upon the order of going, but to go at once" if he wished to avoid unpleasant consequences. The knowing fellow only winked his wicked optic, but made no haste to depart. Flesh and blood could stand it no longer; so I took up whatever came handy, and discharged it at the insolent creature with deadly

intent. But so far as I could ascertain, the only effect of my active fusilade was irreparable damage to certain valuable articles of glass-ware belonging to me. My visitor looked on amused at my impotent efforts to dislodge him. At last I sank back exhausted, and turned over with a fixed determination to shut out all unpleasant sights and sounds, and finish my disturbed nap.

But sleep would not come to my weary eyes. Wherever I turned, I fancied I saw that wretched visitor of mine. But he seemed to be looking at me "more in sorrow than in anger," and appeared to remonstrate with me for the unnecessarily hostile attitude I thought it fit to assume. And, wonder of wonders, he seemed at last to have found my pitch, for he began to speak in a language I could understand. "Why have you not put me in the 'Sketches' yet?" he asked in a plaintive voice. "Bird of ill-omen!" I replied in tragic tones "Why should I? What right have you to go down in the 'Sketches'? In the West and in the East, wherever man has his habitation, your brothers or your cousins flock in countless numbers unwelcome parasites on his bounty——" "You are determined to misjudge us," interrupted the bird, "do you forget our invaluable services in the cause of sanitation. Are you not disposed to be grateful for our zeal and industry in discovering and assimilating organic odds and ends, which, if left undisturbed, might spread unpleasant odours far and near, and might even produce consequences more disastrous than a little discomfort to the olfactory nerve. Are not our services to the farmer in waging war against the vermin, which

destroy his crops, worth a single word of praise?" I was slowly but surely losing my temper again, for I could not bring myself to pardon the impudent bird for disturbing my nap. The recollection of the destruction of my furniture, moreover, had a far from soothing effect on me, and the cool loquaciousness of my visitor irritated me beyond endurance. "Sable bird," I cried in the bitterness of irony, "why do you stop there? Whilst you are about it you might as well ask me to admire your sweet voice, your beautiful feathers, and the exquisite modesty, which marks the whole of your interesting race." "You see not with my eyes, and hear not with my ears, for to me the plumes of my mate appear fairer far than those of the peacock, and her voice sweeter than that of the *Bulbul*; as for modesty, know, oh! irritable scribe, that in this world brass succeeds better than gold, and will you blame me for laying in an ample stock of the former most useful commodity?" I was fairly cornered. I took in a deep breath preparatory to a last and most desperate effort. "All this may be well," I hissed; "but what is man or animal without a character? I pass over your cruelty to the poor helpless birds, who are weaker and cannot defend themselves, I pass over your heartless treatment of your own kith and kin when wounded or sore distressed, but how about that little failing of yours, that trifling confusion of mine and thine, of which you are so frequently guilty? How are you going to defend that interesting weakness, which the learned call kleptomania, but which is known to ordinary mortals by a shorter and more forcible word?" My visitor strove to reply, but the words froze upon his lips—beak, I should say. He seemed suddenly

to have lost his power of intelligible speech. Much as he tried he could not get beyond a loud *caw-caw*, which he proceeded to repeat with irritating frequency.

The thirst for blood again seized me, and through the desperate efforts I made to destroy my adversary, I opened my eyes, and saw scattered before me fragments of what were but a short while ago an useful article of glass. Above the ruins sat the dark bird regarding with innocent satisfaction the scene around. I jumped out of bed, and rushed at him with raised arms, ready to annihilate him, but with a gurgling cackle, which almost resembled a fiendish laugh, he flew out of the window, leaving me to the pleasant reflections his visit had conjured up.

## XXII.

## A SUCCESSFUL TRADESMAN.

HE is not much to look at, this fat but fairly active man. Nature has not been over liberal to him in the matter of good looks. His education might in these days be considered to have been sadly neglected. He lisps not the tongue of the *Bilatee* foreigner. He has given the local schools and colleges a wide berth. In fact, a more hopeless case *a priori* can scarce be imagined, if the university were the only "open sesame" to wealth. But the man is rich, quite a *Croesus* in a mild sort of way. His signature at the bottom of a cheque commands a ready respect, which might excite the envy of poor people with slender incomes, which somehow fail to balance their modest expenditure. *Burra sahibs*, who rarely unbend to natives, greet him with an effusive welcome. A self-made man, he is apt to indulge in odd mannerisms. He has an irresistible penchant for using his finger-nails on various parts of his person, with annoying persistence. If whilst at the office he indulges in the mild dissipation of *Pan* and tobacco, he might leave unpleasant marks in odd places. But it would not be prudent to notice these things. For that man's custom is not to be sneezed at. When he does give his orders, the mail-bags are perceptibly heavier, and there is an appreciable addition to the annual profits.

I suspect, dear reader, you have just a mild sort of curiosity to know where and how our friend made his



money. Such enquiries have a strange fascination for the human mind. The few, who remember him, when he came to the city, will tell you, that at that early point in his career, he was not burdened with a surplusage of worldly goods. But he had willing hands, a sound constitution, steady industry, and an instinctive passion for hoarding wealth. Compared even with the modest gains he made at first, his expenditure was what mathematicians call a vanishing quantity. It was thus that the proverbial nest egg was soon laid, which was to develop by constant accretions into a splendid fortune.

It will thus be seen that the success in life of our friend was not due to any bright inspirations of genius, any masterly strokes of commercial manceuvring, any brilliant exhibition of speculative fore-sight. The homely qualities of steadiness, industry, and thrift, with a little assistance from that indefinable something, people call luck, did the business. Of course you will remember that all this was in the good old days, years ago. Such a thing is scarcely to be dreamt of now, though I am by no means sure that it cannot be managed by a favoured few even yet.

And now I believe you are getting a little impatient to be introduced to our friend's business establishment, the scene of his daily labours, the enchanted region, within whose magic precincts fortunes are made. You have, perhaps, given free reins to your fancy, and imagine it to be a sort of fairy palace in the tropics, with show-windows, and glass doors, and colossal sign-boards, and electric lights, and the hundred and one things, with which the Western tradesman seeks to

attract the well-to-do customer. But you are likely to be disappointed.

Abutting one of the busiest, but somewhat narrow thoroughfares in the native town, is a large building into which you gain admission by two or three wide doors. The interior is mapped out into a number of narrow lanes, and lining these on either side stretches out a row of rather small shops. Each of these little establishments is generally complete in itself, and has no connection with its neighbours on either side, save that of friendly rivalry. The unpleasant glare of the tropics is wonderfully moderated here, and toned down into a modified gloom. The gentle zephyrs blow not over strongly. Yet the haggling and bargaining goes on energetically, whilst the heavy air is set in languid motion by a stray *punkha* here and there.

One is apt to think that all these are retail shops of a third-rate sort, but they are nothing of the kind. They are the centres from which the products of the looms of Manchester, the manufactures of English wool, and the softer fabrics from China and Italy are distributed to all parts of the Empire. Large buyers from up-country come in numbers, and are welcomed with Oriental courtesy, but with a condescension truly remarkable, the humble custom of a poor man, who goes to buy a pair of *Dhoties*, is not always rejected with scorn.

Our friend owns an excellent establishment here, and his annual gains reach a comfortable figure. The vagaries of the Exchange cause him but little anxiety. He is a great capitalist, and can hold on, whilst some of his poor neighbours, who trade largely on credit, come to grief. So through good season and bad he goes on, each

revolving year finding him fatter and happier, and the balance at his banker's more substantial.

This Cræsus has built him a grand house to live in. Quite a small forest of teak must have gone to its construction. From the outside it looks like the palace of an Eastern noble, but the interior is somewhat disappointing. On either side of a rather dark corridor runs a long row of rooms, each complete as a residence in itself, each with a small contingent of tenants, each discharging its quota of smoke and dust into the heavy atmosphere. The commercial instinct is strong even here. Comfort and elegance have to give way before considerations of a financial nature, which have special reference to the net income as compared with the outlay in rupees on the whole concern.

A modest suite of rooms, somewhere in the upper regions of this grand edifice, is reserved for the special use of the owner. From his breezy coign of vantage that worthy individual descends daily to the lower regions on his way to his shops. Returning from work, he slowly and laboriously drags his corpulent person up many flights of stairs, blowing all the while like a miniature steam-engine. But the slight personal inconvenience of this arrangement is counterbalanced by the gain from a hygienic point of view, and the benefits of a little compulsory exercise to a man of otherwise sedentary habits. On the whole, our friend is a worthy and excellent man in his own way, and if people will have a little harmless fun at his expense, he has only to remember that many of them would be but too willing to change places with him on any terms it might please a niggardly providence to offer to them.

## XXIII.

## THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

THE title is likely to mislead. The mother-in-law I wish to speak about is not the terrible being whose voice strikes dismay into the hearts of poor Smith, Jones, and Robinson, and in whose awful presence these worthy persons tremble with a fear, which, elsewhere and in other circumstances, is a stranger to their manly breasts. The Hindoo fears no woman. His own lawful partner may, if she is inclined to imitate Mrs. Caudle, give him a bad half-hour now and again, and he generally submits to this with the easy good humour and exemplary patience of the husband of that estimable lady. But, as to allowing the maternal parent of his better-half to meddle with his affairs, he would never hear of such a thing. The woes of his Aryan brother from the West therefore find no sympathetic echo in his heart. He simply cannot understand the thing. He is generally accustomed to look up to the *Sahib-logues*. Their disapprobation fills him with dejection. He quakes at their frown. How then can he realize that the choleric autocrat, whose awful voice spreads panic through the ranks of *putte-wallas* and office clerks, actually shakes in his shoes before the allied forces at home, who rule his hearth with a rod of iron. To the lucky Hindoo, the mother-in-law is the most amiable being in the world. She rarely ventures to open her lips in his presence. She prepares nice little delicacies

for his special delectation. She tries her very best to bespeak his good-will and favour for her dearly beloved daughter.

But the womenkind of India are not so fortunate. To them the little word *Sasoo* has a significance too deep for utterance. That one word sums up for them all that is unwelcome, all that is bitter, all that makes life on this little planet of ours the opposite of what it is supposed to be in the land of the blest.

Of course there are mothers-in-law and mothers-in-law. There is the good old soul, overflowing with the milk of human kindness, who feels such loving solicitude for the happiness of the tender child-wife confided to her care, that the grateful little thing can hardly distinguish between the maternal parent in the house of her birth, and the one, who in the eye of the law holds a similar relationship to her in the family of her husband. Be it said to the credit of humanity that such kindly souls are by no means rare. But of course they are in a decided minority.

The desire to queen it over every one, who comes within the sphere of their influence, is too deeply rooted in female hearts to be lightly given up. The temptation afforded by the situation is too great to be resisted, and like mother Eve the average mother-in-law yields to the impulse within and falls. She practises the petty tyrannies, with which a shallow nature knows well how to oppress a poor creature entirely at its mercy. She is liberal of those taunts, slights, and insults with which one woman can wring the heart of another.

But Nemesis in many instances but too surely overtakes her steps. The whirl-gig of time brings its

changes, and the tyrants in power to-day are dethroned the next, and their victims reign in their stead. So long as the old patriarch of the family is alive, and especially if he is also, the bread-winner, the power of his better-half is undisputed. But should he shift off this mortal coil, or become helpless physically, the pleasant delights of power have to be exchanged for the cold shade of the opposition, and the domestic reins pass to more youthful hands. Then comes the time for revenge, and revenge is sweet even to the gods. Of course filial love is strong in India, and it is but rarely, that a son will stand silently by, and allow his poor mother to be openly ill-treated by his wife. But a woman has a thousand and one resources, and a marvellous ingenuity in dealing secret and subtle wounds, which wring the heart of the victim with anguish, whilst to all outward appearance her conduct is all that is kind and respectful.

It is thus more or less a case of "angels both!" or in more familiar parlance "six of the one and half-a-dozen of the other." The sins of the mother-in-law are more open, because time-honoured custom renders concealment unnecessary. The revenge of the daughter-in-law is more secret, but none the less real. The chivalrous feelings of men are at once enlisted on the side of the poor girl-wife, and her sufferings win universal sympathy and regret. The poor mother-in-law, when it comes to be her turn to suffer, is hardly interesting enough to excite commiseration. In all this I am taking no account of the shocking instances of physical ill-treatment of girl-wives, which are cropping up now and again. They are fit subjects for the stern investigation of criminal justice, and that blind goddess

represses them with a wisely firm hand, and deals out but short shrift to the culprits. But such brutal conduct towards an unoffending girl-wife is more due to the wickedness of individual temperament than to anything else. To believe that such things happen in the average well-ordered Hindoo family, is to give free reins to the imagination, and to discover the proverbial mare's nest.

Whilst the mother-in-law is in the full enjoyment of her power, she finds at times valuable allies in her own daughters. These amiable young ladies have, of course, homes of their own by this time. Out here in India an old maid is a thing unheard of. Long before a woman has put on the full array of her charms, out she must go from the parental nest to make some lucky individual the happiest man on earth. But though married and settled early in life, there is nothing to prevent them from paying lengthened visits to their parents in the house of their birth, and such visits are neither few nor far between. If these kind ladies happen to have tempers of their own, they can manage to make things pretty hot for the poor girl-wife. They have themselves to submit to the same unpleasant discipline in their turn, but this is reason for aggravation rather than otherwise. Suffering does not always soften the human heart, and that, one has received ill-treatment oneself elsewhere, is frequently an incitement to dealing similar favours to others, whenever it is possible to do so.

But all these things are altered when the girl-wife gets into power. When that much-desired contingency comes to pass, her natural foes are either packed off on

the slightest possible notice, or, if tolerated on the premises, are reduced to a condition of abject subordination. If poverty and self-interest render it desirable to cultivate the goodwill of the girl-wife, the sisters-in-law have to pocket their pride, and to try the sweet blandishments of flattery and simulated affection. If they have no need for this they may take their departure and welcome, leaving their erstwhile victim absolute mistress of the situation, and in the full enjoyment of her legitimate powers and privileges. Sometimes a kind and noble-minded woman scorns to take mean revenge for the past, and content with her own deliverance, abstains from dealing out such treatment to her oppressors, as they have but too richly deserved. But of such good souls there are not many in this world of ours, and for the rest, they are but too ready to deal even as they have been dealt by.



## XXIV.

## THE COOLIE.

THE poor hero of Cervantes might have easily dubbed the Indian *coolie* a knight of the basket, the badge and insignia of the order being always very much *en evidence*. To look at the *coolie* one would hardly be disposed to credit him with much intelligence. But stern necessity is a wonderfully effective teacher, and the poor son of toil turns his few worldly belongings to a variety of uses with surprising ingenuity. There is his *kambli* of coarse wool. During the rains it serves to keep the wet off the upper part of his person at least, and to keep in as much of warmth as circumstances permit. At night the same useful article forms his soft bed of down, or bed-sheet, as occasion requires. Whilst engaged in his humble calling it becomes a soft yielding cushion, which serves to moderate the inconvenient friction of the heavily-laden basket on the head. So again with the basket itself. There is first the legitimate use, for which it was originally designed. It is a convenient receptacle for a large number of odd packages, which he has to carry for his patrons. Then, if he is loitering at his ease in the sun, and the basket happens to be empty, he quietly turns it upside down and lets it rest on his head as a fashionable sunshade and head-gear combined. One possessed of so much ingenuity cannot be an ordinary individual, and the Indian *coolie* rises far above the average intelligence of his class.

He generally hails from over the Ghauts, for his thews and sinews, developed in the dry bracing climate of the Deccan, are markedly superior to those of the soft-fibred race of the Konkan. The *Shasters* as well as time-honoured custom forbid him not the use of flesh. But pecuniary circumstances generally put it out of his power to indulge in the toothsome luxury, save on rare and ever-to-be-remembered occasions. For all practical purposes he is as much a vegetarian as any Hindoo going. The Scotchman develops his large muscles out of oatmeal. The *Ghatee coolie* supports his sturdy frame on *Bajree* bread and *Chutnee*.

Ordinarily, the *coolie* is a very contented individual, for good health, work in the open air, and a simple diet keep his liver in excellent order. There are, however, moments in his life, when it serves his purpose, to appear extremely dissatisfied with things in general, and your sense of fairness in particular. This is during the precise amount of time he spends in arguing with you as to the insufficiency of the payment you have just made, whatever it might happen to be. His arguments are interspersed with pathetic appeals to your generosity, and if he succeeds in wringing from you an extra copper or two, he goes away pleased.

"A pice or two's not much to give,

What then, poor fellow, he must live?"

Yea, not only live himself, but bring up a pretty numerous family of little *Ghatees*, with healthy appetites, to boot.

The *coolie* is a humble individual, but under favouring conditions his honesty is above reproach. You have been making extensive purchases, and

suddenly discover with a blank look that you have left your pocket-book at home. The shopkeeper is obliging. He calls a *coolie*, and orders him to take the things to your residence, and receive payment there. The *coolie* trots merrily by your side, and when you have got your property safe at home, you pay him a sum, which might perchance exceed his gains for a whole year. Here is a temptation for a poor man. But the humble *coolie* is above such weakness. The money is safely handed over to the confiding tradesman, and the labourer receives only his hard-earned wage.

Of course, here and there a dishonest knight of the basket gives the slip to an unwary customer, and marches off with his purchases. The dishonest *coolie* is an excellent judge of character, and instinctively selects mild-looking griffins as his victims. He well knows that the chances of his identification by such people are almost infinitesimal. To a new arrival, the *coolies* would be as difficult to distinguish as so many peas. Once a man has yielded to such weakness, he is almost sure to slide comfortably along the downward path, until he finds himself safely lodged in one of the Indian penitentiaries. Such black sheep there undoubtedly are, but it would be hard to visit their sins on the whole class, and to stigmatize it as dishonest.

There is a robust variety of the *Ghatee coolie* called the *Naoghunna*. He dispenses with the basket, and uses instead a stout pole. A *coolie* at each end balances the pole on his head, a heavy weight is slung in the middle, and the sweating pair stagger along the road with their ponderous burden.

The *Naoghunna* understands the advantages of co-

operation, and joins his fellows in forming well-organised labour gangs. A capable experienced *coolie*, who has graduated with honors in the art of bargaining, and who is gifted with a persuasive tongue, takes the lead. He has one or two able lieutenants, who share with him the responsibility of government. The rest act under the orders of their elected chiefs, and with their united efforts, heavy weights, large blocks of stone, and huge logs of wood are moved with ease and safety.

After a spell of heavy work, they go by turns on short visits to their native village over the Ghauts, there to recuperate their spent energies, and lay in a stock of health and vigour for fresh hard work. Under the favouring influence of good-feeling, and willing labour, the affairs of the little colony thrive, and though there is small chance of its members growing rich, they are nevertheless able to lead happy and contented lives.

• Now there are some kindly and sympathetic critics, who maintain that the native has no capacity for organization of any kind. There is too little cohesion, they declare, between individuals to enable them to keep together, even for a short time, for any good or useful work. To these sceptical persons it would be, perhaps, an instructive lesson in anthropology to observe how smoothly and harmoniously the poor illiterate *coolies* manage their little joint stock concerns. Perhaps when they think of this, and the village *Punchayets*, and the National Congress, they might be less ready to imagine that a partial providence has given all the good qualities to the West to the total exclusion of the unfortunate and less favoured East.

## XXV.

## THE STREET-PREACHER.

I do not believe that the street-preacher is indispensable in the internal economy of an Indian city, but I admire his pluck. His perseverance is truly phenomenal. His untiring industry in a cause almost hopeless cannot fail to excite admiration. There is much to dazzle the eye in the courage of a martyr, but then he has to prepare himself for one signal act of heroism only. It is far more difficult to keep up the disheartening fight with Eastern phlegm and Eastern conservatism. What is a poor man to do with people who can hardly be brought to think and reason seriously, who regard the whole thing as a *tamasha*, as an exquisite joke? Yet the street-preacher rises to the occasion. His faith in the necessity of his labours, and in their ultimate success never wavers. Day after day finds him hammering at the outer defences of what he calls Heathenism. Even a few chance-stragglers rarely reward his incessant toil. But he returns again and again to the charge with astonishing cheerfulness.

The street-preacher trains himself to be almost independent of an audience. Listeners or no listeners, he disburdens himself of his sermon, and feels all the better for it. A worthy enthusiast once stood up in a convenient corner, near a large thoroughfare, and began an eloquent appeal. People were passing by, but no one seemed to take any special notice of the poor

preacher. At last a crowd of natives collected round the *Padree*, and listened to the words of wisdom that fell from his lips. I am afraid many of them could not make much out of the discourse, for, alas! it happened to be in the *Bilatee* tongue, and their linguistic attainments did not extend beyond a somewhat limited knowledge of their own vernacular. This trifling drawback, however, did not prevent them from taking a laudable interest in the proceedings, and at the end of half an hour or so, they departed with evident signs of satisfaction.

But even when the address happens to be in one of the Indian vernaculars, it must not be imagined that the crowd is moved to anything beyond a good-humoured and moderately respectful attention. If the preacher selects his ground well, he is fairly sure of attracting an audience. He generally gets a patient hearing. He is not always over complimentary in his references to their religion. He calls them sinners, he asks them to repent. He reminds them of death and of eternal punishment. He invites them to leave the gods of their fathers and to accept as their Saviour the God of the *sahib-logues*. They, however, listen calmly to all this, and only relieve their feelings occasionally by quietly shrugging their shoulders. A few irrepressible spirits might indulge in sly winks and other telegraphic signals expressive of profound admiration for the learning of the *Padree*. Others more coarsely brought up might give vent to their disgust *sotto voce* in choice terms of Eastern Billingsgate. But the *alfresco* meeting disperses without any overt breach of the peace or even an attempt at violence.

This somewhat satisfactory result might be due in part to the presence of a couple of guardians of the peace in their robes of office, supported by a *sahib* belonging to the force. However this may be, one thing is certain—that the effect of the preacher's discourse in convincing his hearers, and preparing their minds for accepting the tenets of his religion, is almost infinitesimal.

With the professed teacher of religion I have no fault to find. His attack is open. People know what to expect, and can steer their course accordingly. But the amateur preacher is a difficult customer. He takes you by surprise. His advances are insidious. He greets you effusively, and begins the conversation on the most innocent topic. You feel flattered, and answer in a free unsuspecting way. You know you are speaking only to a layman, and are off your guard. Your interlocutor, however, leads you by slow degrees on more delicate ground, and almost before you are well aware of it, you are listening to an eloquent discourse on the comparative merits of half a dozen religions. You are in for it. You cannot shrug your shoulders and walk away. Even a modified yawn, as a relief to your feelings, is only to be indulged in with some caution. The amateur preacher may not, perhaps, succeed in convincing you, but he can give you a bad quarter of an hour or more.

The Hindoo generally keeps his weather eye open. He knows instinctively what is to his advantage. He has the highest opinion of the missionary as a zealous worker in the field of education. As a teacher in the colleges and schools, the *Padree* wins universal respect. But if he essays to work in his legitimate field, his Aryan

brother will have none of him. But the latter is hardly to blame. Besides a pardonable love and reverence for the religion of his fathers, caste hems him in with a net-work of iron. If he breaks through, it will be only at his peril. He may easily pass out of the charmed circle, but it is quite a different matter when he tries to enter it again. Not all the holy water in the holy rivers can ever purify him sufficiently. Fast, vigil, and penance will be in vain. He has left his brethren for better or worse, and he must abide by his choice.

With such difficulties and risk, the game of changing old religions for new is not a safe one to play. It is never an easy thing to give up kith and kin—to part with a light heart from all that is nearest and dearest on earth. To attempt to do so would require almost superhuman courage and strength of will. The work of conversion, therefore, languishes in India. The few that have passed the Rubicon, and have tasted the delights of faith, are, of course, but too eager to share their blessing with others less fortunate, but the wary brethren who are still in the ancient fold make no haste to leave it. They hesitate, and the man who hesitates is—lost (?).

There is an interesting specimen of the street-preacher, who goes about dressed in the clothes of the country. His blue eyes and fair skin declare the European, but his outward garb is that of the holy man of the East. He sacrifices his locks with commendable self-denial, and exposes his naked feet to the tender mercies of the Indian roads. He is a mild peaceful individual, but he used to carry banners



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bearing the device of "Blood and Fire." He is a captain or major, or something else equally fierce and warlike. When he first came to India he would march along to the tune of drum and cymbals. Whether this zealous missionary would succeed any better than the others remains to be seen, but the chances in his favour are not very large.

XXVI.

THE ROUGH.

THE Rough is a being of a superior order. He rises high above the peaceful crowd. He looks down with supreme contempt on the degenerate classes, who are afflicted with an absurd respect for the law, and a foolish dread of the consequences of the infraction thereof. He laughs all such maudlin fears to scorn. His fibre has not been relaxed by the degrading influence of modern education. His heart beats with primeval vigour and bouyancy. He treats as an effete bogey law in the abstract—law considered apart from its effective and somewhat vexatious machinery, apart from the unpleasant *sequelæ* of arrest, fine, and the House of Correction. In its more concrete aspects, as centered in the person of its guardians, especially the *Sahibs* of the force, he has for it a wholesome respect bred of frequent and painful experience. But this serves only to instil a little judicious caution in his proceedings. The Rough's wild and free spirit refuses to submit tamely to any bondage.

The Rough is not always out at elbows. He is not invariably distinguished by a studious neglect of personal cleanliness. He does not precisely don the garb of an Eastern nobleman, of course. But there is often nothing in his dress to betray impecuniosity. Indeed, at times, he is apt to develop a good deal of Arryism, and exhibit a marked weakness for flashy

clothes. He goes swaggering through the streets as if he were a veritable lord of creation. The poor inoffensive folk try to get quietly out of his way to avoid annoyance. But even thus he is not always disposed to let them depart peacefully. If a policeman happens to be looking round the corner, prudence and the beautiful instinct of self-preservation might counsel the adoption of a cautious policy ; so the rough restrains his natural instincts and walks demurely along with an air of child-like innocence. But as soon as the object of his dread has disappeared from the scene, he recovers his wonted playfulness, and is his own light-hearted self once more.

For various jobs of a delicate, if somewhat questionable character, the Rough has the skill of a specialist. He is also of a very accommodating disposition, and if his patron is only disposed to be sufficiently liberal, there is hardly anything that the scoundrel will not undertake. A sneaking man of wealth (untroubled by any scruples of conscience) has an enemy or a rival whom he cannot openly face, but who must nevertheless be made to feel his vengeance, even if it be by the hands of a deputy. He quietly opens negotiations with the Rough. After the little question of *Baxis* has been settled to the satisfaction of the desperado, he arms himself with a stout stick, and lies patiently in wait for his victim. When that unfortunate individual arrives on the scene, the Rough goes for him with a will, bestows half a dozen hasty but hearty blows on various parts of his person, and takes his departure amidst the cries for help, and groans of the poor sufferer. If the prompt arrival of assistance prevents the Rough from making

good his escape, he submits with sullen stoicism to such immediate corrective discipline as the just indignation of the crowd prompts it to bestow before the ruffian is handed to the tender mercies of the outraged laws. He accepts without a murmur his *kismet* in the shape of enforced retirement relieved by compulsory labour (an excellent hygienic precaution by the way). He may be accompanied to the House of Correction by his worthy employer, but the latter individual is often too wary to allow himself to be brought within the clutches of the law. The blind goddess is habitually over-scrupulous in the matter of evidence and proof. So the unprincipled prime-mover manages at times to sneak off, whilst the comparatively less culpable instrument of his malice is made to bear the full punishment of his crime. When the period of expurgation is over, the Rough returns to the scenes of his labours, sad and weary, but scarcely repentant. After resting awhile, the fresh air and a generous diet soon restore his energies, and he is ready again for any odd job that chance may throw in his way.

When not engaged for his patrons, the Rough does a little work on his own account, for work he must, if he would live. He stoops not to pilfering or petty larceny. He would feel his manhood degraded by such a mean, sneaking sort of occupation. On the other hand, honest labour is irksome and proportionately unremunerative. He therefore prefers the business of a professional bully, and levies blackmail on a small scale from poor timorous people, who cannot summon sufficient courage even to appeal to the authorities. If he is modest in his enterprizes, and careful in the

selection of his victims, and keeps, moreover, a bright look-out for the myrmidons of law, he gets on well enough for a time. But fool-hardiness born of temporary success eventually proves his ruin, and his natural enemies, the police, get him safe in their clutches, and continue their kindly help, till they have him securely lodged in one of the Indian penitentiaries.

The Rough has a fine eye for a pretty form. A delicate face, or a neatly turned ankle wins his undisguised admiration. He pays assiduous court to beauty. He is no maudlin milk-water youth, who dare not even lift his eye to the face of his idol. The Rough has the boldness of conscious superiority. The coldness, or even the alarm of the unfortunate recipient of his unpleasant attentions does not disconcert him in the least. Her just indignation excites only an impudent leer. Nothing short of superior force (as represented by a powerful body of enraged citizens, or of the guardians of the law) could make him desist from his unwelcome advances. If he finds it unsafe to continue the frolic, he takes to his heels, but the fates are at times too strong for him, and he returns to his familiar quarters at the House of Correction.

Detractors may in pure meanness of spirit throw unworthy doubt on the morality of the Rough, but his piety is beyond cavil. He loves the religion of his father's with an exceeding love, and resents any slight cast upon it with the keenest indignation. A word, a gesture, may suffice to wound his morbid sensitiveness, and his vengeance is swift and sudden. The poor, the helpless, the innocent, may suffer, but that is a mere bagatelle. Property, life, and limb may be lost by those

who have never given any offence, but the faith of his ancestors (whichever it might happen to be) is vindicated, and that is some consolation. The heavens may be serene one moment, the storm may burst the next. The bolt may fall out of a cloudless sky, and do its work of indiscriminate destruction, sparing neither man nor child. Such are the exigencies of life in the East. But after all what brooks complaining? It is *kismet*. It is the decree of a merciful Providence!

## XXVII.

## THE SMART STUDENT.

HE is yet in his teens, but the cares of an empire weigh heavy on his soul. His mental horizon has undergone a precocious development far beyond his years. His tender intellect has already commenced to do battle with the vexed questions of the day. Politics, social reform, education, religion, all these have begun to excite in him a consuming interest. He does not pick his way gingerly through these weighty subjects either; but, with the delightful confidence of youth, forges ahead in a right royal manner.

The bump of reverence seems to have been but ill-developed in him. He is an intellectual socialist. He has quite outgrown the time when he should listen and inwardly digest, but not venture to open his lips save to propose doubts and difficulties. He fancies himself the equal of any man going at argument. He would not shrink from an encounter with the most learned *savant*. The trifling fact, that a subject under discussion requires knowledge of a special or technical character for the proper understanding of it, would not disconcert him in the least. A man of intelligence can understand most things, and the student's ideas of his own powers of comprehension are not remarkable for their modesty.

He reads the papers and periodicals—not a bad thing in itself, save that the mind of the youthful student is

apt to be filled with a host of exciting questions, which he can scarcely understand properly yet, and which might distract his attention sadly from his legitimate studies. There is a time for everything, and surely at such an early age; class-books ought to be a sufficiently heavy pabulum for the budding intellect. He has but to bide his time, and he would find himself soon enough face to face with the stern realities of life. The grave questions which concern his well-being, and that of his brethren, will press themselves all too early on his attention. Why then break in upon the happy carelessness of youth, with reflections on Local Self-Government and the Elective Franchise? These topics might well be left for the ripe wisdom and mature experience of manhood.

The smart student delights in reading fiction; not the healthy and entertaining tales of travel and adventure, written for the young in high-class magazines; not the delightful productions of fancy, which are presented to the youthful mind under the charming form of fairy-tales; nor yet the masterpieces of the great humourists, but cheap and sensational literature, which an English father will never tolerate even for a single moment in the hands of his son. Every hour that could be stolen from study is spent in poring over the noxious stuff. His lively imagination catches fire at the exciting incidents, and he begins to build castles in the air, and forms hopes which can never lead to good.

A being of such intellectual activity must have a grievance, and the smart student has one ever-ready at hand. The young man has the examiners on the brain,



and goes for those luckless individuals whenever he gets a chance. He is never tired of expatiating on the wickedness of the whole class, and if he gets the least encouragement, waxes quite eloquent in his denunciation. The disease breaks out in a virulent form during the season of the annual examinations, and the smart student, if he has been unfortunate, relieves his feelings by calling down the choicest blessing on the head of his unfeeling judges. Now, I am by no means disposed to express unqualified approval of everything done by the learned body who undertake to decide on the merits of candidates, but it strikes me, that the smart student might do some practical good to himself by thinking more of his own shortcomings, and a little less than is habitual with him of the vagaries of the examiner.

Then there are debating societies, where the youthful members discuss such interesting questions as "The Evils of Early Marriage," "The Necessity of Animal Food," and other matters of an equally exciting character. \* They who are mere lads yet are, of course, in a position to form correct and decided opinions on such matters. The debate is lively. It is a question of the West against the East, and when it comes to a division, the West carries the day with an overwhelming majority.

Now all this is very well, but to carry an old head on young shoulders is productive of more serious mischief than drawing down on the poor lad a little harmless ridicule. India is an early country, but even in India precocious development carries its sure punishment in premature decay. The youth of India are India's hope

and those who wish well for their country cannot fail to look with concern on the fact, that while the European lad is enjoying the bright and unclouded happiness of healthy youth, and playing at cricket and football, his Eastern brother is pondering on such weighty questions as "the necessity of social reform," and "the desirability of the *ganja* commission."

## XXVIII.

## A SHARP MONEY-LENDER.

HE came from somewhere in the North, from a land, where the heavens are unkind and the clouds drop not their liquid burden in abundance—a land where consequently water is a scarce and precious commodity. The results of this dearth of the purifying agent were painfully evident both on his person and his clothes. These were certainly not in the condition which is supposed to make a very close approach to godliness. At this particular period of his life, our hero did not belong to the aristocracy of wealth. An inventory of his worldly possessions would not have been a very long one. A small brass pot, a few well-worn and greasy clothes, two or three current coins of silver, constituted his little all. This was the capital with which he began life in the city. He naturally commenced at the very foot of the ladder. His first commercial enterprize consisted in walking the streets with a small basket on his head containing a moderate supply of hot-roasted groundnuts. Though new to the work, he was by no means shy. “*Bhujelisheeng*,” rang his shrill voice, and customers came.\*

Now, Nature had not been very kind to our friend in the matter of features. His face was not modelled by that partial goddess exactly after that of Apollo Belvedere. Being more over-fresh from the country, his manners were not remarkable for their elegance.

Lastly, he belonged to a race which has certainly not gained a strong hold on the affections of the people at large. The result was that the poor man received a good deal more of attention of an unpleasant character than was quite desirable. For one *bonâ fide* customer there were half a dozen whose only desire was to indulge in a little mild chaff and badinage at the expense of the poor hawker. Even the unclad urchins in the streets made frequent and playful allusions to his tripartite locks, adding further remarks not meant for ears polite. A few of the bolder spirits among these would even take annoying liberties with his person, such as pulling his clothes, or sending stones flying in unpleasant proximity to his ears. All this was usually borne with exemplary patience, for "sufferance is the badge of all his tribe." Occasionally the limit of even his forbearance was reached, and then with threats loud and deep he turned upon his persecutors, but they refused to budge an inch, and a merry peal of laughter was the only response vouchsafed to the poor wretch. The little urchins knew their man well enough, and were confident that his courage could rarely be got to the sticking point. He would not take the offensive, however great the provocation. So each party stood facing the opposite, lowering looks on one side, and sturdy defiance on the other, until the poor hawker thought better of the matter, and prudently put an end to further hostilities by a rather hurried departure, amidst much jeering and shouts of laughter from the victorious band of diminutive heroes behind.

These unpleasant experiences notwithstanding, our hero was making steady and satisfactory progress. His

gains were moderate, but his expenditure more moderate still. So that the coins that passed into his purse remained there, and received moreover constant and comfortable increment. Accumulating capital gave very soon a spur to the ambition of the hawker, and his business transactions assumed a more enterprising character. Groundnuts were discarded in favour of *pathashàs* (sugar cast in moulds), a large basket well filled with the precious commodity reclining peacefully on the shoulders of our friend. A fair spell of work at the new business enabled him to take one step more up the ladder, and his old customers soon recognised him the proud proprietor of a miscellaneous collection of brass and copper pots. It was inconsistent with his newly-acquired dignity to carry his stock-in-trade himself, so the services of a cooly were engaged, and that meek individual staggered along the streets after his master, with a heavy load of the latter's property on his head.

By this time the hawker had got fairly acclimatised in the city. He had become more familiar with its ways. The unpleasant attentions so disconcerting to the novice had become small by degrees and agreeably less. His confidence in the strong arm of the law had grown with the growth of experience. He had already made his *début* as "plaintiff" in that great repository of his rights and privileges, the lesser temple of Themis, known to the people by the euphonious title of *Eesmall-Cause-Codat*. In this familiar and delectable roll of plaintiff, the man was destined to reach a perfection which comes only through constant and unceasing practice. It need not be said that he had already commenced to

accommodate select customers with small loans which bore a satisfactory rate of interest. Fortune was smiling on him, and when that fickle goddess deigns to smile, all goes well with the favourite.

Amongst his compatriots, the reputation of our friend as a thrifty and capable man of business was deservedly high, so when a junior partnership in a local firm of money-lenders of great repute fell vacant, it was promptly offered to, and accepted by, the quondam hawker. In the new sphere of life to which the propitious fates had summoned him, he had ample field for the exercise of the choice qualities of head and heart with which bountiful Nature had supplied him, and which might be summed up in the expressive phrase, "an aptitude for business." He seemed to have a magic power of attraction in his palm. Money flew to it quite naturally, and stuck there with a tenacity which defied earthly power to dislodge it from thence. Its proper line of motion was from the hand of the money-lender to the strong boxes, wherein the accumulated wealth of numerous predecessors and co-partners was hoarded up in an ever-increasing heap. True that a few coins did occasionally leave the possession of their owner, and passed nominally into that of an unfortunate customer. But they were only decoy ducks, which returned soon enough with a host of companions to bless the acute man of business.

And yet the money-lender was really kind-hearted, quite a benevolent soul! and his customers in the fulness of their gratitude trusted him much. They would place in his hands blank notes (bearing only their estimable name or mark over a small bit of legal

paper with the likeness of Her Most Gracious Majesty impressed upon it) with child-like simplicity. For a few coins received in cash they would execute quite a small number of these interesting documents, which were, of course, not meant to be seriously enforced—no, not by any means! They were just for the purpose of showing how much the customers trusted their kind benefactor. But alas! for the continuance of peace and goodwill on this earth, the course of friendly fellowship never did run smooth.

The time would inevitably come when these incoherent legal tokens would blossom into full-fledged documents, and a call before the civil tribunal would generally end in a peremptory command, by the proper authorities, to pay up or suffer the consequences. Then would naturally follow an appeal to various processes against person or property until the demands of the creditor were satisfied. Even a trodden worm turns at last, and the ill-used debtor might in sheer desperation seek relief from his oppressor by soliciting the kindly help of that benign tribunal, which might after certain formalities, and on certain conditions, absolve him from the fatal obligation to pay.

But our hero is prepared for such a cowardly manoeuvre on the part of his victim. He has still in his possession a few more of the precious tokens of confidence placed in his hands by the unsuspecting customer in the good old time gone by. These useful relics might after a few formalities be used to put the unfortunate wretch once more on the rack of legalized persecution. So the unequal fight goes on until the superior animal has, metaphorically, sucked the last

drop of blood from the veins of its victim. But the subject is painful, let us pass on.

Have you seen a spider catch a fly? And have you been surprised at the curious resemblance between the manœuvres of the predatory little insect and those of his human prototype? Well? It is nothing new, you say? I admit the comparison has been used before. But just look a little more closely. Which of the two do you think the wiser, the spider or the man? You cannot say? Well, then, I believe the superiority of wisdom belongs to the insect, and in this way. If a spider *will* catch flies and kill them, it is not without cause. He puts his defunct victims to immediate use. As he sucks in the sweet juices from the still quivering carcase, his own body glows with the access of generous nourishment. Each part of his anatomy expands under the beneficent influence of a rich diet. If the spider succeeds in catching many flies, he grows fat and happy. The external world wears to his eyes a rosy aspect. He is at peace with himself and his brethren, and takes quite a cheerful view of things in general. Now look at the human spider. How stands the case with him? If he succeeds in catching many victims, he certainly grows rich. But does even a small part of his wealth take the form of a generous deposit of adipose tissue? Rarely. The chances are that his wealth remains secure in the form of coins of the realm, and incommodes his strong boxes. As he gets more prosperous, he catches, perhaps, the gold fever, and instead of increased wealth, meaning additional comfort, it might result in greater penury and self-denial. The wretch might even refuse himself some of



the necessities of life, and ever at war with his own conscience, and suspicious of the outside world, end a life of comparative misery with a painful death, leaving his vast hordes to some unsympathetic heir, who would make haste to appropriate the property of his defunct relative, without deigning to bestow a single thought on the slave of Mammon, who toiled only that his successors might reap the benefit.

## XXIX.

## THE. "KOLI" OR FISHER-FOLK.

ON the calm blue waters of the sea, out away towards the western horizon, dazzling specks of white attract the eye. Of course they are sails, and if you love to be on the "murmuring deep," your fancy busies itself with a thousand and one memories associated with the pleasures of yachting. They must be yachts, you say to yourself, those fine boats in the distance, each bearing a joyous party of lucky mortals who are spending a happy day on the blue waters. Perhaps the fair have condescended to grace many of these merry gatherings with their presence. Visions of lovely faces, ices, and champagne rise before your mind's eye, and make you long inordinately for a pair of wings. It is as well, perhaps, that your wish cannot be granted, for otherwise there would be rather a rude awakening from your pleasant day-dream. These boats are manned by the *Koli* and his tribe, who are engaged in the useful but far from attractive pursuit of deep-sea fishing. The costume of these fisher-folk whilst engaged in their work is somewhat scanty, and the odour which emanates from their persons and from various parts of the boats is enough to drive away all ideas of romance out of the most obstinate head.

Yet are the scenes of the *Koli*'s labours the most enjoyable in the tropics. Overhead is the bright blue of the Indian sky; below, as far as eye can reach, the

clear transparency of the azure liquid. The pure fresh breezes blow health and vigour into his frame, and temper the fierce blaze of the noon-day sun. It is amidst surroundings such as these that the poor *Koli* casts his nets and patiently awaits the arrival of the finny tribe. When he has gathered his precious harvest of quivering life, he makes for the shore. Arrived there, he hands over his share of the booty to his better-half, who has been anxiously on the look-out for him for the last hour and upwards. There his labour ends, his responsibility ceases. He has done his day's work, and may now take his rest with a clear conscience. Should he feel so disposed, he may yield himself to the soothing influence of *somnus*. If, on the other hand, he feels himself up to a little mild excitement, he has only to step over to his friend the *Bhandari*, and take a glass or two of something short and stiff.

Now, people are apt to imagine, that here in the East woman is unto man but as a toy, a mere plaything, if not something worse, whilst in the West she is his honoured help-meet, his guardian angel, the idol of his heart. This sounds very encouraging, but perhaps the strong-minded champions of their sex may have a word or two to say about it, that may not be altogether pleasant. However this may be, certain it is that in many instances the *Koli* woman has effected her emancipation, and established her right to be considered as fairly the better-half of her somewhat phlegmatic lord and master. In the domestic economy the man has at times hardly any voice. He is not always the guardian of the common purse. To his share falls generally the somewhat mechanical work of catching

fish, which makes but modest demands on the intellectual faculties. He has, of course, privileges and allowances. He is the acknowledged head of the family, yet the reins of government are frequently in more efficient hands; and well it is, perhaps, for all concerned, that the keener wit of the woman is made available for their common advantage, as affairs thrive under her skilful guardianship.

I am afraid people are sometimes apt to forget their manners in the presence of the *Koli* woman. They do not always show the delicate courtesy due to her sex. If, as she stands by with her basket on her head, the zephyrs blow from her to her customers, sensitive olefactories might compel the sudden and somewhat prolonged use of the pocket-handkerchief. Again, if they are rash enough to engage in an energetic argument with her about the value of her finny treasures, the discussion might take an unpleasant turn. The poor woman has her own opinions and convictions on the subject, and is apt to become impatient of contradiction. She has, moreover, no time to pick and choose her words, and might make use of language which they would resent as wanting in proper respect and consideration towards themselves. This would end in a serious altercation, which might threaten the peace of the neighbourhood, but the pacific instinct in man usually prevails, a compromise is effected, and the contents of the basket change hands for a satisfactory equivalent in coins of the realm.

During the rainy months, when "ocean heaves his angry billows," and when it is dangerous for the frail fishing craft to tempt the treacherous deep, the *Koli*

woman busies herself in mending nets, and making everything nice and trim against the next spell of fair weather. If there is more leisure on her hands than she knows what to do with, she may repress for a time her carnivorous instinct, which breathes death to the creatures of the sea, and assist in sowing corn for the vegetarian. This is, of course, a temporary make-shift, not a real renouncing of her usual vocation, for, as soon as ever the sun shines brightly again, she is ready to take her basket on her head, and hawk her finny wares with as much energy as ever.

There is a curious and interesting contrast between the sharp-tongued dealer in fish and the quieter vendor of green vegetables and fruit. The latter is as hard to overreach in the matter of bargaining as her sister, but she carries on the discussion with greater tact and moderation. The former trusts to carrying conviction by the force of her language. The latter by modest praise of her wares, and a little judicious flattery gets you to believe that what she is asking for them is only a fair price. Both are successful in their own way, but I cannot help thinking that the tactical advantage lies clearly with the ingenious seller of fruits.

Now I have been somewhat curious, why all the world over fisher-folk are renowned for the use of the most forcible and expressive terms the language is capable of. I believe it all comes from the nature of their wares. These cannot keep fresh and saleable long. Time is precious. What is valuable at one moment may pretty soon become almost worthless. So there is no leisure for a search after polite expressions, and sharp and vigorous language is the

order of the day. Habit becomes second nature, and the vendors of the treasures of the sea gain an unenviable notoriety for the use of choice and forcible epithets.

To return to the *Koli* woman. She may have her faults, and her little weaknesses, but she is bright, intelligent, and shrewd, and devoted to her husband and children, and works for them with a will. Her strong, practical good sense enables her to carry on her business with profit to herself and proportionate advantage to the family. Her phlegmatic lord must indeed find her a trusty and efficient help-meet, and on the whole, affairs go on much better than if he essayed alone the task of bread-winner, and she attended only to the cooking.

## XXX.

## THE LITTLE STREET-HAWKER.

I MUST confess that to the casual observer the little street-hawker is not likely to be an object of much interest. Commerce on a large scale is apt to dazzle the eye, and inspire the ordinary individual with a wholesome and proper respect—respect proportional to its own vastness. The world, as is but just, falls down at the feet of the successful *Millionaire*, but it is by no means disposed to show the same consideration to the petty tradesman of the street. This is, of course, as it should be; nevertheless, the latter has many points of interest to those who are disposed to look a little below the surface of things, and to analyze the contradictory feelings which actuate that curious and wayward piece of mechanism, the human heart. I hope then to be excused if I seek to direct attention to these animalculæ of business, the tiny specs of life that struggle on amidst a shoal of porpoises, and whales, and other gigantic fishes of more or less size and might.

The first thing that strikes us as strange, with these poor Homunculi, is the ridiculously small stock-in-trade with which they bravely fight their way in a cold and unpying world. Here is a diminutive tradesman with the ripe wisdom of ten summers, manfully trudging along the streets with a tiny wooden box, containing his small store of cheap sweets or fruits in an advanced state of maturity. Poor little fellow, it is

perhaps just as well that the friendly warmth of the tropical sun renders clothing a mere luxurious superfluity, for his wardrobe is extremely scanty. A small strip of cloth round his loins, a few rags hanging somehow on his back, a well-worn cap—all these, in a confirmed state of “original sin” make up his far from picturesque costume. This is a hard world, and it takes a good deal of patient and active canvassing before he can turn his almost unmarketable commodities into much-needed coin of the realm, and when he does manage to do this, what profit remains to the diminutive tradesman to compensate for a hard day's toil and trouble?

There are various ways of looking at things. To the man of the world, the boy is a stupid, uninteresting, dirty little wretch, and to add to his numerous sins and shortcomings, a thing of colour, a human animal with a plentiful deposit of the *Pigmentum nigrum* on his person, not to be washed out with tons of Old Brown Windsor—and he does not even use an ounce, the unconscionable scapegrace.

Only a dirty little boy! But the poor fellow may be a little hero in his own humble way. Fancy the many temptations he has to conquer every day. He sees his more fortunate friends at play, flying kites, let us say, or in joyous communion with marbles, or setting little tops spinning round and round with astonishing rapidity. As he passes along the *maidan*, and sees boys of his own age at cricket, shouting out *pl-lay* and *ow-oot* in a merry voice, his little heart flutters in that diminutive breast of his, and his fingers itch to catch the little sphere of leather, and send it spinning away



at the wickets. But he may not do it. He must attend to business. The chances of a meal may depend on his disposing of his perishable wares. Yet another day, and his already far from fresh stock might lose the little value it ever had, and the little tradesman become virtually bankrupt, though his humble concerns are far too lowly to attract the notice of even the benign tribunal that succours the hard-pressed debtor. No, business must not be neglected on any account, and the poor little soul turns with a sigh from the attractive sight, and moves slowly away in search of customers, uttering his shrill eulogium on his humble wares.

Now poverty and want are hard task-masters. Their severe discipline does, indeed, at times succeed in bringing out all the good in a man, and in teaching him industry and self-reliance. But honest labour is irksome and frequently unremunerative. On the other hand, successful mendicancy, at least here in India, might, and does at times lead the way to comparative affluence. There is, moreover, in the life of a beggar a seductive ease and freedom from care, that have a fatal fascination for a poor over-worked son of toil. Lastly, there is nothing to fear. In England, that severe goddess Themis does not countenance the soliciting of alms. She punishes such weakness with exemplary severity. Out here the law is more lenient. Religion and custom spread their protecting ægis over the objects of their special favour and solicitude. So that in India a man takes to begging on the slightest provocation, and in the most natural and unaffected way imaginable. Mendicancy as a profession has this

further advantage, that it requires hardly any capital—in fact, the less the better. With such manifold advantages as an ideal means of earning a livelihood, how comes it that so many turn away from it with loathing and scorn. What is that indefinable something working in a man's breast, which makes him prefer the most severe and continuous labour to a life of dependence on the charity of others? When yon big hulking drone, sporting a ring on each finger, demands your money, in the name of religion, in a loud and imperious voice, and comports himself, as if it is he that is conferring a favour, and you are the humble recipient of it, what is it that makes this little waif scorn the bread which he has not earned with the sweat of his brow? A stupid dirty little boy he may be, but there is surely that in him which makes humanity rise, somehow, to a height it does our heart good to contemplate.

India is a country of paradoxes and contradictions. Here you find side by side with the most unblushing mendicancy—mendicancy that goes about with a strut and a swagger, as if it had reason to be proud of itself—the most patient and uncomplaining industry, whose sole reward is starvation, disease, and suffering. Look at the miserable *ryot*. In all this wide world his woes win but little sympathy or help. *Indra* turns away from his piteous prayers with a frown, and but rarely sends down the fructifying deluge in timely abundance. Even when Nature is kind, and plentiful showers descend in welcome profusion on the earth, and draw forth a rich harvest of grain, a host of vermin, (Nature's unwelcome free-booters) rob the poor patient man of his hard-earned bread. Then there is the

benevolent *Sowkar* ready to put forward his irresistible claims to the greater part of what the unhappy wretch manages to save from drought and insect plagues. The *Sirkar* struggling with the vanishing rupee, and the ever-increasing demands of its own costly machinery, can (however kind and well-disposed) do but little for him, and so the poor wight toils on unrewarded, yet uncomplaining, taking all the ills of life with a sweet cheerfulness which is astonishing. Nay, in the fulness of his heart he might even give a handful of rice from his own scanty store to a poorer wretch, whom starvation has forced to solicit help even from this charitable pauper.

Benevolent critics might say what they like about the people of India, but one might almost challenge them to show any where—else, the sublime spectacle of a starving peasantry, so patient, so uncomplaining, so law-abiding, so loyal withal, as that we see in this sunny region, the Eldorado of the past, the land of the *Pagoda*, tree.

## XXXI.

## MASTER JACKO IN CONFINEMENT.

MASTER JACKO is, I own, a prime favourite with me. I am never tired of looking at his merry gambols. His sly pleasantries rarely fail to amuse me. At times, the rogue has a little fun at my expense, and causes some damage and consequent annoyance, with the natural result that he has to receive corrective discipline at the rope's end; but I can hardly find it in my heart to be angry with him very long. He soon coaxes me into good humour, and I begin to smile in spite of myself. There is one peculiarity about Jacko which tickles me immensely. However frivolous his occupation may be, he puts on a serious air, the effect of which is irresistibly funny. Now, it is true that Jacko is at times open to the charge of doing wanton mischief, but this is more his misfortune than his fault. A certain sable personage with wings and horns, is supposed to find plenty of work of a questionable nature for those who have more leisure than they know what to do with, and poor Jacko is thus the victim of circumstances over which he has no control.

Even in a state of nature Jacko is by no means a desirable neighbour to man, and causes much damage to his fields and orchards, and robs him of the hard-earned fruits of his labour. But this is in the serious way of business, and not out of wanton mischief, or a merely idle desire to do harm. The poor rogue must live. He

is equally subject with ourselves to the curse, which makes it necessary for all animals to go forth in search of food, which is not always forthcoming, in satisfying quantities, and of a desirable quality. He does not like to work any more than man, and if he finds his dinner ready to hand, and to his liking, it is too much to expect him to stop to settle nice questions of justice, morality, or ownership. In his native freedom, the monkey is too much occupied with the serious business of life to have much time for frivolity. The safety of himself and his family claims his first care. Then there are foraging expeditions in search of the wherewithal to satisfy the incessant demands of nature. But chained or free, the monkey dearly loves a "lark," and if a favourable opportunity offers, the temptation is too great to be resisted, and, like his reasoning cousins, the poor creature yields to the impulse within, and falls. Often he has to pay dearly for this, but nature is too strong for him, and he can rarely get over the innate frivolity of his disposition.

When, however, poor Jacko finds himself with a leather belt round his waist, with iron links entwined, which sadly limit his ability to roam at will; when, moreover, food and drink are found for him ready to hand, is it very wonderful that the lonely prisoner sets his little brains thinking to find out ways and means to beguile the tedium of the dull hours, which crawl all too slowly for the poor wretch? It is but natural that the restless activity of mind and body, put under a cruel and unwarranted curb, find their vent in a feverish desire for doing mischief of one kind or another. But too high praise cannot be given to Master Jacko for the wonderful

ingenuity and readiness of resource, he always brings to bear on the matter.

In a state of solitary confinement a monkey has but two desires, which he cares to gratify. The one is a love for mischief, the other for his dinner. Gourmandising is with him a passion, which takes precedence of everything else. His appetite is truly marvellous, his digestion phenomenal. If you offer him a choice tit-bit he rarely refuses, and what is more remarkable, he hardly ever suffers from his excesses. His incessant activity might account partly for this wonderful immunity, but he must surely have inherited from some hardy ancient ancestor an alimentary canal of exceptional strength and vigour (far surpassing that of his distant cousins ever so many degrees removed).

But when the demands of nature are satisfied, at least *pro tem*, or when fresh edibles are not in sight, then comes the great question what to do with his little self. Then begins a restless motion in and out, and twisting and untwisting of the chain, and merry gambols to and fro, and jumping up the pole, and sliding down, and swinging backwards and forwards, and round and round, until one begins to fancy that the wiry little limbs must be stiff with fatigue. No such thing. The little gourmand is quite a philosopher in his own way, and is well aware of the hygienic value of Nature's own remedy for the evils of gluttony. The constant and ceaseless exercise purges the system of unwholesome humours and keeps the internal fluids pure and healthy.

But, however useful this sort of work may be, it is at best but tame, and the poor creature cannot help tiring of it sooner or later; then heigh ho! for a little

excitement and fun. In one of his playful moods Master Jacko made friends with a fine active tabby. The latter creature being young and frisky, and quite ready for a game of romps, the two got very affectionate and were inseparable companions. Once, however, pussy happened to be sulky and disinclined for play, but Jacko would not be denied. He began to tease her and take liberties, which she resented by giving Master Impudence a taste of her paw. The latter retaliated by a wicked bite, and now there is a coolness between them, and they won't take any notice of each other.

It would never do to leave anything valuable within reach of the long-tailed rogue, for his curiosity is unbounded, and his powers of destruction proportionately great. If by any chance he manages to get at your *Pugree*, a few unrecognisable rags are all that will be left of your property. Once Jacko succeeded in setting himself at liberty, and was next seen with a volume out of a costly set in his hands, turning the leaves over with wonderful gravity, and making faces at the pictures in the book. The person who saw him, in his anxiety for the safety of his property, and thinking to frighten the monkey away, and induce him to drop his prize, yelled at the top of his voice, and made a rush at the four-handed thief. Master Jacko was, however, too quick for him, and before the scamp was caught, the book was in ruins, with half the leaves torn out, and the other half in a sadly damaged condition.

But with all his faults I have a soft corner in my heart for poor Jacko. It is I who am chiefly to blame. Was I not accessory (*post factum*) to the unjustifiable

abduction of the little fellow from his family, and forest friends? Have I not condemned him to perpetual bondage, without any fault of his, and without even the formality of a trial? *Mea culpa! Mea culpa!* I have more to answer for than poor Jacko.

As the unfortunate fellow sits wistfully looking at the green trees in the distance, what strange thoughts pass through that little brain of his! As he remembers the glorious days in the forest, how queerly must that little heart be fluttering in his breast! What a longing (and a natural one, too) must he have to be once more amongst the green leaves, leaping from branch to branch with marvellous precision of eye and limb! When I look at the poor wretch in this pensive mood, I feel a sympathetic pang. I begin to ask myself, What right have I to keep this bright creature in chains simply because his funny antics please me? A mere lump of clay without soul or reason he may be (at least according to the religious philosophy of the West), but somehow that lump of clay feels pain and pleasure, and dim memories of the happy past come to that little brain, as he gazes on the blue hills out yonder, and recalls the time when he was with his light hearted brethren, jumping merrily from branch to branch under the leafy canopy, high up in the air.

But confess, Master Jacko, that your involuntary residence in the midst of civilization has its compensations. Your natural enemies of the forest cannot get at you here. You need not live in constant fear of coming to a sudden and violent end. If Toby will bark at you, you know that his bark is worse than



his bite, and as you sit safe out of reach, and grin and chatter your contempt of the vain endeavours of your silly opponent to get at you, you laugh in your sleeves (at least you would laugh in them if you had them), you sly rogue! Here you can take your little siesta without the dangerous possibility of being rudely startled out of your sweet slumbers by the sudden shock of a heavy body falling on you, feeling the next moment the cruel fangs of your murderer in your throat, and his sharp claws in your side, and having to flit to the happy hunting grounds of the next world, almost before you have time to utter the last agonised shriek. There is, moreover, no fear or danger of starvation, no anxious search for the wherewithal to satisfy the incessant demands of nature, no necessity of taking any thought for the morrow. Your owner does all this for you, Master Jacko, and you have only to jingle your chains and be happy.

But alas! liberty is dear in spite of contingent drawbacks, and there is but little doubt that the wretch, if left free to choose for himself, would actually prefer the wild life in the woods to all the pleasures, comforts, and advantages of civilization.

## XXXII.

## THE BOAT-WALLA.

OH! the misery of a sultry summer day in the tropics. The heat is stifling. The thermometer stands at more degrees in the shade than I care to mention. Throughout the whole of the afternoon I have been deliquescing—melting away, helplessly, hopelessly, yet I trust with becoming resignation. The process is not a comfortable one, and when the sufferer measures more round the waist than—well—than is altogether convenient (mind, I do not quite plead guilty to the soft impeachment—not quite), this is naturally matter for aggravation. But relief is now almost at hand. A few tantalizing puffs as delightful as evanescent soon develop into a steady breeze, and I saunter down to the *Bunder* to enjoy the fresh sea air, the temperature of which has been agreeably lowered by long travel over the vast expanse of water. I take deep inspirations, and as my lungs fill up with the diluted ozone, I feel a pleasant sense of freshness stealing over me. The cool breeze blowing on my heated limbs seems to breathe in new life at each pore. I realise the luxury of existence. To me, at this moment, merely to live is a pleasure. I am like the Lotos-eater; I have not the slightest desire for exertion; but as I lie stretched at my ease on a bench, I feel happy, and am duly thankful. I gaze around me with dreamy eyes, but I can hardly take in any of the details of the charming scene before me. My fancy is busy conjuring

up pictures of a delectable character. I am building castles in the air, in which ambition and enterprise have no room, but which are consecrated to the more homely delights of ease and comfort.

But, though I am unaware of it, my advent has caused quite a flutter amongst several horny-handed sons of toil, whose eager eyes are watching me with keen interest. These are the *boat-wallas*, who are speculating anxiously on the chances of securing my patronage for a quiet sail round the harbour. Having decided the matter to their own satisfaction, and having come to the conclusion that I am good enough for an hour's engagement at the least, a serious difficulty yet remains. It is not as to who should "beard the lion," for they are one and all but too willing to do that, but the question is who is to have the first trial. The crews belong to different boats, and each puts forward his own claim to precedence. Each is trying to satisfy his rivals that he is in the right. Such a discussion would naturally never come to an end, but the intelligence and good sense of the disputants comes to their help. Instead of wasting time in idle arguments, which can never succeed in convincing any one, and instead of rushing pell-mell at the quarry, who might either take alarm and beat a retreat, or, with so much competition to help him, might succeed in getting the better of them and driving a hard bargain, either of which contingencies would be undesirable from a business point of view, they manage to get out of the difficulty in a very ingenious way. The element of chance has irresistible attractions for the mind of man, and an appeal to it is ever likely to meet with favor. So the poor people toss up amongst

themselves for the right to my custom (which, however, is as yet only in *posse*). The successful *boat-walla* approaches me, and in a subdued voice asks:—*Boat mangtâ, Set* (“do you want a boat, sir”)? *Achâ jolly boat, Set!* (“Fine boat, sir”). My train of pleasant thoughts is disturbed, and I am impatient. *Nai, mangtâ jao* (“I do not want one. Go away”) I answer somewhat testily. The poor man slinks away abashed. But “hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Before he has taken quite a dozen steps, he turns back and tries a parting shot: “Fresh breeze, sir; fine day for a sail, sir,” he suggests coaxingly. I am melted. I give in. The little question of *baxis* being settled, I step down into the boat, the crew follow me, and with a push we are off on the blue waters. •

• Oh! the luxury of an evening sail in the tropics. The sea is as calm as a lake, and with the white canvas well stretched out by favoring breezes, we are gliding along with a gentle motion, which is very enjoyable. We have no fixed destination. We are drifting before the wind, only taking care not to run foul of any vessel, nor court destruction on any rocks or other natural impediments to navigation. What would we not give to be going on like this for ever, without any carking cares or anxieties, or any of the inevitable trials and troubles of life! Would it, I ask myself, be anything like the existence promised hereafter to the blest? But the sun has set, the short tropical twilight is over, and darkness is creeping on apace. Sundry familiar sensations in the inner regions warn me that the hour of dinner is drawing nigh, and that it would be inconvenient to tarry longer, where I am at present.

I therefore reluctantly give the order to turn the boat's head towards the pier. We are soon once more on *terra firma*. I settle with the *boat-wallas*, and, being in an amiable frame of mind, am weak enough to yield to their cry for *largesse*, and we part, mutually satisfied with each other and with the evening's work.

But it must be admitted that there are boats and boats. I once got into a small cockle-shell-like affair, which was habitually in an alarming state of unstable equilibrium, and which the slightest motion on either side would send flying out of the perpendicular. There was a glorious sense of insecurity rather trying to the nerves. Now I trust I have as much philosophy as most men, but I must confess that I could not contemplate with equanimity the possibility of being immersed in cold water, clothes and all. I did not think, like the immortal Sir John, that "I had a kind of alacrity in sinking." I was not afraid that I would find my way straight to the bottom through any depth of liquid. Yet I had a decided objection to provide, in my own precious person, a toothsome banquet for ravenous members of the shark tribe, who sometimes take it into their heads to make a reconnaissance in the harbour. The frail craft had no sail, and was propelled through the water by the languid efforts of a couple of seamen, who plied each a short paddle of a somewhat antiquated pattern. But these unlucky wights were hardly to blame. They had procured the best their limited means could afford! They had somehow to earn their daily bread, poor fellows. My friends, I wish you well. I won't step in again, thanks. But I do hope some one with better nerves will give you a trial. I shall be

glad to hear you are doing well. But as for getting into your boat again—my fears may be vain, indeed I believe they are—but really, really I do not think I could manage it.

Then there are the *Bunder-boats*, with their green paint and enormous sails and diminutive cabins. They are good things for pleasure trips to small bunders in the neighbourhood, as well as for a delightful cruise round the harbour. When the wind and tide are favourable, the crew have very little to do but to sit in a quiet corner staring vacantly at the blue hills in the distance, or engaging in a desultory chat with the more affable passengers. But the wind is proverbially a fickle servant, and it often happens, when the boat is, say, a couple of miles, or more from the shore, that a dead calm sets in, the aerial steed gets sulky and strikes work *pro tem*. You fancy you are in for it. With the pier in sight you might have to wait *volens volens* for hours until the welcome breezes begin to blow once more. Your patience is not subjected, however, to such a trial. A dozen oars or so are out, and twice as many stout arms are pulling heartily at them. The huge boat begins to move, and is kept going at a slow but steady pace. The speed is nothing to be proud of, but it is some consolation to know that you are approaching *terra firma* even if at a snail's pace.

Those who have neither the time nor the patience to submit to the caprices of the wind, may requisition the smart little launches, in which the steady business-like click-click of the steam-engine replaces the fickle element as a motive power. There are many, however, who prefer the fun and excitement of a trip in a

sailing boat, and who consequently bestow their patronage on the *boat-walla*, and respond to his usual appeal for *largesse* with a liberality, which causes the poor man to raise his hand to his cap and exclaim in the fulness of his heart, "*Bohot, Bohot salaam, Set saheb!*"

## XXXIII.

THE MOORGHEE (*Domestic Hen*).

DOES an animal predestined for the table know it? I suppose not. If it does, its stoicism is wonderful, for you will never by any chance find it melancholy, so long as its immediate wants are attended to. Even if the owner happens to be indifferent and the poor *moorghee* has to trust to her own exertions to escape famine, you do not find her down-hearted. She is as industrious as a bee, though she does not hoard up her treasures. She is always rummaging about odd corners and places, discovering and appropriating any little morsels of food, which her keen sight enables her to detect, though they entirely escape your eyes. You only see the business-like downward swoop of the beak. You see it open and grab at something, and then close again with more or less satisfaction. But your observations extend no further. How many pecks go to a dinner? A rather complicated calculation, depending obviously on what is secured at each operation. Anyhow, give the poor *moorghee* a sufficient heap of rubbish to work upon, and she is happy.

The *moorghee* is something more than happy: she is useful. She is a wonderful medium for recovering in an acceptable form the nutriment which, so far as man is concerned, would otherwise have gone to waste. The magnet moved over the dust of the workshop picks up the scraps of iron scattered on the floor. Quicksilver



acting on crushed quartz separates and appropriates the grains of precious metal. Even so the *moorghee*, rummaging over a hill of unsavoury stuff, selects therefrom and assimilates organic odds and ends, which go to make up for her a hearty dinner. She is, moreover, liberal in her own way, without perhaps meaning it. After the wants of her own body are duly satisfied she works up the excess of nourishment into a little white ellipsoid, which, when fresh laid, is, they say, if done to a turn, quite a *bon-bouche* for an epicure. Of course, the silly bird has no such generous object in view. She only thinks she is fulfilling her duty, in helping to present to the world incoherent duplicates of herself and her proud lord; but that is her business, we have nothing to do with it.

As day after day she drops the little white pellet, of dormant life, does she ever wonder what has become of those she has already laid? Has her eye wandered by chance to the *Ivanee's* shop over the way, where her precious treasures and those of her feathered sisters are temptingly displayed in a small basket, for the inspection of customers, who can secure them for the trifling consideration of a copper or two each? It is well for the peace of mind of the poor *moorghee*, that she does not understand arithmetic, or she might break her heart over the matter. When temporarily exhausted with laying, she might be permitted perhaps to indulge her second instinct of sitting over a few of the yet fresh *ova* saved from the greedy man of business, with the view of warming them into active life. After a few days her patience is rewarded, the shells are cracked, and out come little living balls of soft

feathers, with a funny head and neck protruding at one end, and a pair of thin legs shooting out at the other. By and by the little brood gets quite active, and the tiny balls scamper hither and thither with ludicrous activity, flying to the wings of the parent for shelter at the first alarm of danger.

There are various ways of looking at things. To me, who am content with fruits and grain and other vegetable stuff for my dinner, the chicks are certainly not interesting gastronomically, yet as I watch the pert little bipeds moving about with a knowing air, and poking their funny heads into all sorts of queer nooks and corners, I cannot help feeling amused. The conscious pride of the mother *moorghee*, as she regards her little brood as though she would say "see what pretty dears! Were there ever such fine chicks?" and the supreme indifference and even contempt, with which the old male fowl treats his diminutive progeny, are alike irresistibly comic.

"I do not know how the human carnivora feel, particularly the fair ones. Cooked and served up to their taste, the little chicks must be acceptable to them, "they are so tender and juicy." But what I am curious about is how they regard the tiny creatures whilst yet alive and moving about at their sweet will. Is sentiment entirely absent in the matter? Can they regard these tender balls quivering with life as so much flesh to be roasted or boiled and nothing more? Can they in imagination already see the poor things stiff and plucked reposing temptingly on their plates? I do not know. But I would fain believe that the kindlier spirits among them feel perhaps a gentle pang of remorse now and then.

The establishment of an Anglo-Indian *Bungalo* is not complete without a pretty numerous retinue of feathered dependents. Amongst these you will find a number of *moorghees*, some with their little broods crowding around them. The poor creatures are tyrannised over in turns by a couple of tough old sinners, who cry "Cock-a-doodle-doo" and fight with each other for very life on the slightest provocation. Then follows an equally numerous flock of their aquatic cousins, who move along with a rolling awkward gait, and utter now and again their unmusical refrain of "quack-quack." A few specimens of the rarer varieties of feathered bipeds completes this useful menagerie. The birds are well fed and seem quite happy, and blissfully ignorant of the untimely fate in store for them. Go to! ye silly fowls, rejoice whilst yet you may. When the knife is at your throat, who can say what will follow—utter oblivion, or a waking up in another world, better or infinitely worse?

The *moorghees* of the *Bungalo* may be considered to belong to the aristocracy of domestic fowls. They are well cared for, well fed, and are generally plump and tender. They can hardly be said to fall under the description of the Indian *moorghee* proper, which latter fowl is reported to be a slim tough creature, requiring considerable strength of jaw to struggle with its attenuated and firm flesh. The genuine specimens are to be found about the huts of poor natives, who keep them as useful additions to their slender resources. The poor creatures have mostly to shift for themselves. The wretched owner bestows upon them an occasional feed of cheap coarse grain, carefully calls them in at

night, and shuts them up under a basket. In these gloomy and uncomfortable quarters the unfortunate things pass several hours, and as soon as it is daylight the wary individual goes to the extempore roost to appropriate any gifts his dependents have prepared for him, and lets them out for the day to go forth in search of such a meal as chance might favour them with.

The *moorghees* are a source of profit to the owner, but are naturally a nuisance to the neighbours, especially if they happen to be Brahmins. The poor hungry fowls are always anxiously in search of food, and the sight of even a few grains of corn is sufficient to attract them from quite a distance. They are, however, by no means welcome. To the poor Brahmin, who has faith in his *Shasters*, the *moorghee* is an abomination, and her presence in his house a scandal to be avoided at all hazards. So when the unclean animals get into forbidden quarters, there is sure to be a row, an exchange of high words, and much loss of temper. But man is proverbially a selfish animal, and the incorrigible owner looks to the profits he makes by keeping the thrifty birds, and steadily refuses to mend his wicked ways. The other is too kind to take mean revenge on the feathered trespassers. So he has to drive them away again and again, [and otherwise simply to grin and bear it.

## XXXIV.

THE HINDOO LADY (*Old School.*)

HER figure is a trifle fuller than what it used to be, but she is a cheerful bustling body, active and kind-hearted. She is up with the lark and at her domestic duties. The kitchen is her rightful domain, over which she holds undisputed sway. Her government though just, is essentially despotic, as she is responsible to none. But, in her rule, justice is largely tempered with mercy. There are child-wives in her house, whom ancient custom leaves under her absolute control. They are apt at times to be foolish and wayward, and cause much vexation to the poor old soul, but though as a true daughter of Eve, she dearly loves to scold, her heart overflows with the milk of human kindness. Her anger is evanescent. After administering a severe reproof to one of these young ladies, which makes her sulk into a corner and ply her fingers vigorously over her eyes to stem the torrent of grief issuing from those ever ready fountains, and ere the tears are yet dry, she would call the little lady to her side, and, gently wiping her eyes, give her a bit of cake which she has thoughtfully prepared for her.

Her power over her daughters-in-law is supreme. She might lead them the life of slaves. She might get them to bear all the drudgery whilst she enjoyed the ease and comfort to which her age and position entitle her. But she would never even dream of such a thing.

Work is one of the few pleasures life still holds out for her. She has, moreover, a pardonable pride in her own culinary skill. It is a pleasant fiction, though with her it is an article of faith, that a dinner prepared by others can never have the relish which her cunning fingers can impart to it. Poor old soul, does she know how some of the sly young rogues turn their noses at the vegetable stuffs which sufficed for their fathers? Is she aware what powerful rivals she has in the *Ivanee*, who keeps a shop over the way, and the *Feringhee* confectioner? How can she realize that to some of the fast young men of the rising generation oyster-patties have a greater fascination than *Dal-bhat* and *Chutney*? It is as well, perhaps, that she does not even suspect such a thing, or she might break her poor old heart over it.

She is a staunch supporter of the old order of things, a firm believer in the old religion, a liberal patron of the holy Brahmins. She can neither read nor write, but the faith of her ancestors handed down by immemorial tradition is to her the only thing that claims her firm devotion and respect. The fatal scepticism of the age has never had the least chance with her. Her faith is necessarily narrow and crimped, but it is nevertheless a real living faith, which actively moulds her heart and life. The observance of frivolous and vexatious minutiae often entails unnecessary hardship. The accidental touch of an unclean animal or thing might mean an unseasonable bath resulting in fever and ague. The frequent fasts, moreover, are apt to sap the vital energy, and bring on weakness and consequent suffering. But, with all these unpleasant drawbacks, it would be idle to deny that there is often a real

purifying and elevating of the mind above selfish and worldly desires. The chrystallized essence of her religion amounts to this: "It is virtuous to do good to others, sinful to do harm." Can all religious truth be brought into shorter compass, or expressed more simply and intelligibly.

In the inevitable trials and troubles of life she has a host of kindly powers to whom she could appeal for help. Her religious notions have always a practical turn. She admits the truth of the saying, that in this huxtering world, "nothing is to be had for nothing;" so that if one would bespeak the help of the heavenly powers, the prayers must be backed by a substantial promise to give or do something, contingent on the granting of the boon, as otherwise they are likely to bear little fruit. So each threatened calamity calls forth some undertaking agreeable to the powers that be. Even then, the humble devotee is often slighted, and has to bear the full brunt of adverse fortune, but this does not shake her faith in the least. It is to be set down to *Kismet* or *Naseeb*, and there is an end of the matter.

Then there are pilgrimages to the holy shrines, and fasts and vigils, and the frequent bestowal of *Dan* and *Daxina* on the Brahmins, which, if the Holy Writ is to be believed, will surely bear ample fruit here and hereafter. All such things appeal irresistibly to her guileless heart, and she cheerfully submits to much discomfort and even suffering, never doubting that the somewhat large promises held out will be redeemed in the fulness of time. It is by the generosity of such artless souls that an intelligent priesthood is maintained, and is kept in a flourish.

ing condition, perhaps, all the world over. Experience rarely confirms the anticipations of faith, but the true heart never wavers in its trust. What is denied in this world might be realised in the next.

The Hindoo lady of the old school has a horror of *Bilatee* medicine, and rather than accept the preparations of the *Feringhee*, would cheerfully submit to any sickness or suffering. But it must be admitted that a fairly good constitution and active and abstemious habits enable her at times to set age and disease at defiance even up to the "three score years and ten," set down as the average span of human life.

The old Hindoo lady might not be clever, but she manages to win the affections of all who come within the sphere of her gentle influence. She is loved and respected by those who know her, and when the race of life is over, and the mild eyes are closed in their last sleep, even Baloo the servant, who is generally guiltless of sentiment, turns aside to drop a tear; a rare visitor, indeed, to those eyes. The clever sons, with all the pride of their *Bilatee* learning, feel a strange pang as they recall the faithful unselfish devotion of a life-time, but too frequently repaid by thoughtless slights. Even their little brides feel keenly the loss of the gentle love, which came as near to that of a mother as it is possible for any love to come, and tears rain down their pale cheeks, as they realize that the kind heart that was ever-thoughtful and solicitous for their well-being is stilled for ever. Say what you like, there is one good soul the less on the earth, and the world is poorer by one humble and loving heart.



## XXXV.

## THE GHATEE-TAT.

THE *Pucka*-born *Ghatee-Tat* whose fibre has not been relaxed by a dash of Arabian blood is a very hardy creature. He is not much to look at perhaps. His frame too, often develops a surprising variety of angles and curves. His hair is coarse and thick, and if untrimmed, presents a wild and dishevelled appearance. His knees strive at times to meet each other with a graceful inclination inwards. He certainly does not appear the embodiment of strength. His sinews do not stand out in bold relief like a mass of 'cordage. Yet it would be unsafe to infer weakness from this, for the endurance of the plucky little animal is phenominal. In a long race against time and patience, under the most unfavourable conditions of diet and stabling, few animals can hold their own against him. The racer, who would show him a clean pair of heels for the first five or ten miles, would be nowhere, perhaps, at, say the thirtieth. Would it be believed that the diminutive *Ghatee-tat* formed at one time the remarkable mount of the finest cavalry in the world. Man and beast were both slim and wiry, without an ounce of superfluous flesh about them, but with a wonderful hardihood, the like of which is rarely to be seen. The heavy Mogul horseman was a type of manly strength and vigour. His steed was a splendid animal, powerful and mettlesome. But they were neither of them a match for their less showy but

tougher opponents. No impression could be made on that wild and odd-looking rabble of horses and men. Scattered and dispersed in one place, they would soon reunite, and were again mischievously active at such a distance from the late scene of action as made it a hopeless task for the enemy to follow and overtake them. It was with the help of the trusty *Ghatee-tats* that the Mahrattas dealt the fatal blow to the Mogul power in India.

Calling this wild band of guerillas, this undisciplined horde of skirmishers, the finest cavalry in the world, brings a smile of amusement to your face, does it not? Well, if you think that the true *raison de etre* of cavalry is to look grand at parades and reviews, and to march past in splendid and imposing squadrons, *cadit quaestio*. All you have to do is to get the tallest and stoutest men you can find, dress them in the smartest uniforms, and mount them on the biggest horses that money can procure, and there you are. But if the real use of cavalry is to accomplish what the infantry cannot do, if it is their business to reconnoitre secretly and expeditiously the positions of the enemy, if they are intended to cover large distances without halt or stoppage, and on the slightest imaginable rations, then big men and big animals are alike entirely useless, and the *Ghatee-tat* is the thing for you, and the lightest and most wiry men are the ones to be selected.

Starvation, at least a low diet and hard work, seem to be actually beneficial to the *Ghatee-tat*. They serve to keep in wholesome check a natural exuberance of spirits, which is but too apt to find visible expression in vigorous lashing out with the hind legs, a tendency to use the teeth, and sundry other peculiarities more

quaint than agreeable. Give the animal a hearty feed twice or thrice a day, and let him enjoy comparative relaxation from labour, and he would soon be in a condition of open mutiny. He would defy the authority of anyone to control his movements. If he is put into harness against his will, a free use of his hoofs would soon reduce the vehicle to a battered condition, necessitating extensive repairs before it becomes serviceable once more. If the animal is taken out for riding when quite fresh, the chances are that the rider, unless he happens to have an exceptionally firm seat, would before long part company with his steed in a hurried and precipitate manner, the opposite of convenient or agreeable. Such is the *Ghatee-tat* when well-fed and tended, yet keep him on moderate rations, and give him plenty of hard work, and he becomes sufficiently docile and tractable. There will always be some traces of the wild blood in his veins, but under proper management he will not give any trouble.

As a buck-jumper of wonderful skill and daring a vicious and overfed *Ghatee-tat* would take high honours. The unfortunate tyro, who is induced by the wicked fates to cross the back of this odd Bucephalus, soon discovers that the task of coping with him is beyond his strength. At the very outset the noble steed shows his stubborn spirit by refusing to budge an inch. A persistent use of the bit, and a shower of heavy blows with a stout bamboo stick by way of a gentle hint to move on, prove ineffectual, at least for a time. The mouth of the animal seems to be formed of iron, and his skin of the true pachydermatous type. Well it is for the rider if he owns himself vanquished, and retires from

the unequal contest with a sound skin and with no bones broken. If he persists in keeping his seat, and continues the use of bit and stick with the added stimulus of a pair of sharp spurs, the obstinacy of the creature might be overcome, and leisurely motion in the desired direction might at last reward the perseverance of the man.

But, alas ! this good understanding between rider and steed does not last long. The poor *tat* begins to regard his human burden in the light of a nuisance, and devises ways and means to get rid of it. The animal's readiness of resource is wonderful. He has a variety of masterly manœuvres at command which would try the skill and nerve of the most expert horseman. After making a wild rush forwards, the creature suddenly and without the slightest warning depresses its neck, the heels being at the same time elevated in the air, an inclined plane is formed, along which the rider slides comfortably down to *terra firma*, leaving the pony free to decamp from the scene of action as fast as his legs will carry him.

Should this trick fail, the wicked beast might try to stand on his two hind legs in imitation of the reasoning cousin on his back, who has to do all he can to save himself from slipping, saddle and all, over the crupper, right down to where he would be in a favourable position to receive a parting caress with the hoofs. If the featherless biped goes safely through this ordeal, he has yet to prepare himself for a number of clever evolutions intended for his special delectation, and in the course of which he runs the serious risk of dislocating the vertebrae of his neck. As a last resource

the *Ghatee-tat* will suddenly sit down, and try to roll over its unfortunate victim. It is rarely that the animal has to own itself beaten, and yield itself tamely to the guidance of its conqueror.

The *Ghatee-tat* is not a very amiable creature in prosperity, but adversity has often a wonderful effect in toning down all the unpleasant traits in man or animal, and in bringing out the latent good. In the city under the care of a rich and kind master, the *Ghatee-tat* is apt to develop the odd and annoying peculiarities for which he is remarkable. But see the animal brousing quietly near the tumble-down hut of a poor *ryot*, and you will find a different being altogether. The wretched master can hardly get a full meal for himself and family, but keeps two unfortunate equine dependents to help him in earning a little welcome cash by taking a stray traveller now and then to some neighbouring village.

For eight months in the year the poor animals subsist on a little hay and such odds and ends of vegetable refuse as chance throws in their way. Corn they hardly ever taste from year's end to year's end. At times even the stray supply of hay fails them, and then the poor starved creatures have to struggle with the parched brown soil blowing off the dust to get at the few shreds of vegetable fibre still left in the ground. Whilst engaged in this pitiful occupation does not the *Ghatee-tat* present a painful, if somewhat unfashionable, version of "Patience on a monument?" But even such misery has a period of relief.

Once the kindly rains have poured their welcome deluge, there is a change in the condition of the *Ghatee-tat*. An ideal existence opens up for the poor starved

creature at least for a time. There is hardly any work to do, and that is some relief. Then the moist earth sends up a plentiful supply of tender grass-shoots, sweet and nourishing. Life begins to wear once more a rosy aspect. Dull care and misery are scattered to the winds. The *Ghatee-tat* eats his fill and grows fat, recovering at the same time a touch of his temper and other unpleasant peculiarities. But this eldorado vanishes with the monsoons. Then comes the dry season again with its long spell of work and famine rations, and with it a more patient and equable frame of mind.

Now some may admire the graceful Arabian, others might give the palm to the splendid racehorse of England, but for me the poor whimsical, diminutive, patient, enduring *Ghatee* pony possesses a peculiar interest, which I do not feel for any other species of the equine race.

## XXXVI.

THE GOWLAN (*Milk-Maid.*)

MILK!—the very word is refreshing. What a delightful beverage has Nature provided for us all! When we come into this world with toothless gums, feeble and tender, and unable to cope with corn or flesh, a thoughtful Providence arranges beforehand our fluid dinner. Woe betide us if the natural supply fails, for nothing can quite make up for it. Even later in life most of us preserve our fondness for the sweet and nourishing draught. Fruit-eater or carnivorous, soldier or humanitarian, Brahmin or *Mlencha*—we all sink our differences here. Even those who owe firm allegiance to the *Shasters* accept this product from the living animal as an agreeable article of diet. The tender-hearted man from Guzerat, who would shrink from all animal food, as from some horrible abomination, yet makes an exception in the case of the precious fluid which flows from the udder of the sacred cow. The whiter and more nourishing secretion of the far less sacred cousin of the genus *Bubalus* is by no means despised. From both these useful liquids the ingenious man extracts with subtle skill oleaginous derivatives for which he has a pardonable weakness, and which he usually consumes in pretty liberal quantities.

There are some people who never seem to feel quite happy unless they can make others uncomfortable. I am sure they mean well, but that does not reconcile

me to their meddlesomeness. Why will they not let us alone? Why must they be always making horrible revelations? Why should they, Cassandra-like, utter doleful predictions, which may or may not come true in the end, but to which the man with average strength of nerve and average supply of phlegm does not feel disposed to pay the slightest heed? Why should they spoil my little innocent pleasures for me?

I come hot and tired from work. I feel a certain sense of emptiness within, which is Nature's usual signal for refreshments. I take a cup or two of warm milk agreeably sweetened to taste. As I quaff the nourishing beverage, I feel a gentle glow of satisfaction. The usually troublesome monitor within reviews the act with silent approbation. Here have I satisfied an urgent bodily want, and given no just cause of offence to man or beast. Even the ascetic *Shasters* can say nothing to me. My pleasure has not been purchased at the sacrifice of any life. I have caused no pain to any sentient thing. A little selfishness there undoubtedly has been, in taking from the poor calf what was meant by Nature for its sustenance. But that must have been made up to the poor little creature in some way or other, at least I hope so. Moreover, I know neither the dam nor her offspring, and that is some consolation perhaps. But this is a digression.

I enjoy my cup of milk, and have taken it, and there the matter ought to end. Why then must my peace of mind be disturbed, and my nerves set all in a shiver by painful details of the successful spreading of deadly infection through the medium of this otherwise harmless fluid? Is it a pleasant thing to be told



that in that little cup you thought so innocent might be lurking the grim spectre of death. Man of science thou meanest well ! But a fico for thy lugubrious prophecies. Thinkest thou I would give up this nourishing cup for all thy wild fancies and fears ? One chance, perhaps, in millions of coming to harm ! Go to, the very air we breathe might be worse by a hundred-fold.

But what has all this talk to do with the milk-maid ? Why, absolutely nothing. I do not think she ever troubles her little head about these matters. Her custom has certainly not fallen off. We have plenty of phlegm here in the East, and are not so easily got into a panic by medical enthusiasts. Not so some of the *Saheb-logues*. They prefer their milk tinned for them in Europe. The milk fresh from the cow in the East might contain unknown abominations that condensed in the West, months ago, might perhaps be fresher and more wholesome. Well, each one to his tastes. The world is surely wide enough for us all.

The milk-maid is up before day-break, and bustling about with the cheerful activity of youth and health. As soon as she has finished her simple toilette, she is out in the streets and on her daily rounds, stopping at each familiar door to pour out the usual quantum of white fluid from her ample store. She balances nattily on her head quite a small pyramid of bright brass pots, and in these she carries her liquid stock-in-trade. As she moves about she has an air of sweet innocence which is quite refreshing, but I am disposed to give way to morbid fancies. Somehow I cannot get the idea out of my head, that the milk I get at times is thinner than when it came from the cow. Due allowance must

be made both for the quality and quantity of food given to the poor animal, but I am still unconvinced. I believe my suspicions are unworthy, there are no tangible facts on which to ground them, I know it is wrong to think ill of one's neighbours, but I cannot reason myself out of my uncharitable mood.

We live in a matter-of-fact age, and there is more of hard prose than poetry about the modern milk-maid, but a halo of romance comes clustering around her from antiquity, from the delightful days when Krishna played on his tuneful reed, and a rapt circle of *Gopees* and kine listened to the divine melody. The Indian lyric poet has sung in glowing verse of the gay doings of these simple folk, of song and dance, and the sweet languishings of tender passion. But words fail me. If you have any curiosity, dear friend, study Sanskrit, and read and enjoy for yourself the song of songs—the “Gita Govinda” of Jayadeva.

THE END.

## A GLOSSARY

OF

INDIAN WORDS AND PHRASES USED IN THIS WORK.

*Asùra* : A Demon.

*Bairàgee* : A holy man.

*Bàwà* : A holy man.

*Baxis* : Reward.

*Bhat* : Brahmin.

*Bhujeli shceng* : Roasted ground-nuts.

*Bilàtee* : English.

*Burra* : Great; big.

*Chakdi* : A small cart.

*Chelà* : A disciple ; a pupil.

*Dàl-Bhàt* : Boiled rice and pulse.

*Dàn* : A gift.

*Daxinà* : A gift of money.

*Dhobi* : Washerman.

*Dhoti* : A garment worn round the loins and legs.

*Eesmall-Cause-Côdat* : The Court of Small Causes.

*Feringhee* : An European. \*

*Foujdàri* : Criminal.

*Foujdàri Adawlat* : The Court of Criminal Appeal (High Court.)

*Gharbhàs* : Guzrathee songs.

*Gopees* : Milk-maids.

*Gorà Logues* : White people ; Europeans.

*Gouri* : A goddess of the Indian Mythology, the wife of Mahadeo.

*Jo Hookum* : "Whatever the commands may be,"  
obsequious subordination.

*Kālāpāni* : Black water ; the ocean.

*Kali* : The last of the four great ages, the evil age, also the name of the evil being who is in power during the fourth age.

*Kāmbli* : A coarse cloth of wool.

*Komchà* : A basket.

*Kismet* : Luck.

*Lakshmi* (*Lakshmi*) : The goddess of wealth.

*Lotà* : A small pot.

*Mahātmās* : Great souls ; great spirits.

*Maidan* : A plain ; a level tract of ground.

*Mathaband* : A white cloth worn by Parsee ladies over their hair.

*Mhassālji* : The servant in charge of lamps.

*Mithai* : Sweets.

*Mlenchàs* : Foreigners ; non-Hindoos.

*Nowker* : A servant.

*Nuseeb* : Luck.

*Nyàya* : Logic.

*Pàn* : Betel leaves.

*Pāni or Pāwni* : Water.

*Pādvē* : A Christian clergyman.

*Pardeshi* : A foreigner, a term specially applied to a class of Hindoos coming from Northern India.

*Pattewalla* : A peon.

*Pbathec* : A sacred book.

*Poojā* : Worship,

*Pooranic* : One who recites the pooranas (holy books.)

*Puckà-born* : Thorough-bred.

*Puggree* : A head-dress.

*Punchayet* : A meeting of members of a caste, or the residents of a village to arbitrate on and settle disputes without an appeal to the courts of law.

*Punkha* : A fan.

*Rāhu and Ketū* : The moon's nodes. Two mythological demons who are supposed to swallow up the sun and the moon and thus cause the eclipses.

*Saheb or Sahib* : An European.

*Salaam* : A bow.

*Sāree* : A cloth worn by women.

*Sāssoo* : Mother-in-law.

*Shāsters (Shāstra)* : Holy texts or books containing the tenets of religion.

*Sirkār* : The government.

*Solawater and Limlet* : Sodawater and Lemonade.

*Sowkār* : A creditor ; a money lender.

*Suffet Capra* : White clothes ; plain dress ; ordinary dress.

*Tāmashā* : A show.

*Tat or Tattoo* : A pony.

*Vyākarna* : Grammar.

*Wrata* : A religious observance.

*Zoli* : A bag of cloth.





